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MIDYEAR REPORT

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WCW

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Wrestler^{THE}

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TOP 10 FACEOFF!

For the third straight year, we match up the top 10 wrestlers in the WWF with the top 10 of WCW and tell you who we think would win. Some of the results might surprise you!

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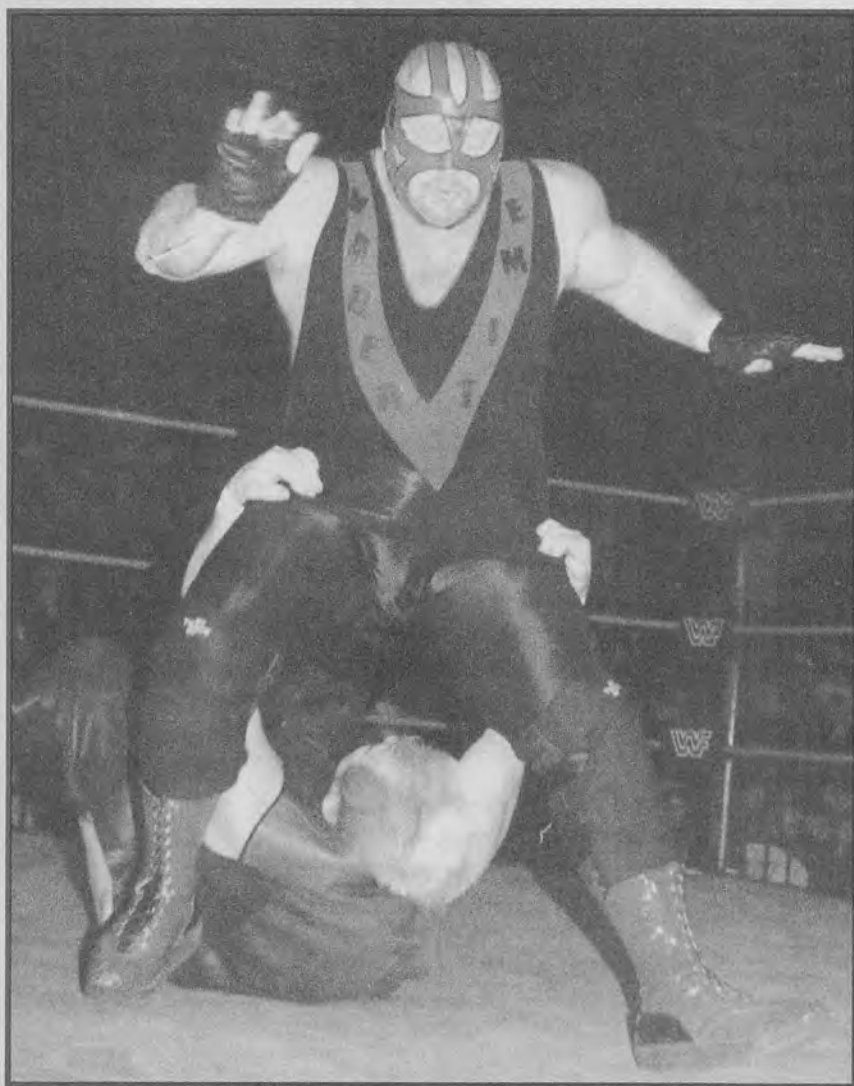
WHEN IS VADER TIME?

Several weeks ago, I saw a video on *Raw* hyping the return of Vader, who had been out with an eye injury. Then Senior Editor Bill Apter wrote a column in one of your sister publications about how Vader was training and how "hungry" he was to get back.

Finally, Vader came back. He must have really been hungry,

because he was in the worst shape I've ever seen him in. How could he let himself go like that? He was once a world champion, but now chumps like Mark Henry don't think twice about taking him on. What will it take to get Vader back on the winning track?

GARRY HALL
White Plains, NY



Vader struggles to avoid being taken down by Barry Windham's sunset flip. Vader has been struggling a lot since he returned from an eye injury. Reader Garry Hall thinks he knows one of the reasons why.

WELCOME BACK

I'm so glad Rey Misterio Jr. is among the ranks of active wrestlers once again. He is the most talented wrestler by far in WCW. He will have that cruiserweight belt around his waist in no time.



Rey Misterio Jr. has recovered from his knee injury and is flying high again in WCW. Reader Melissa Massara is certainly glad to see that.

Chris Jericho wishes he could wrestle half as well as Misterio. So does Dean Malenko. But the only way Jericho could keep him down was by bashing his knee with a toolbox.

MELISSA MASSARA
San Diego, CA

CHYNA SYNDROME

In the August 1998 issue of *THE WRESTLER*, you gave Sgt. Slaughter a "thumbs down" for being overpowered by Chyna during the Owen Hart-Hunter Hearst Helmsley



Why does Vince McMahon enjoy watching WWF stars such as Dude Love torture Steve Austin? Reader Tammy Tidwell has an interesting theory.

match at WrestleMania XIV. While she was handcuffed to Sarge, Chyna helped Helmsley reach the ropes when he was in the "sharp-shooter." She then blinded Slaughter with a handful of powder and gave Owen a low blow, causing him to lose.

So you guys at THE WRESTLER suggested that the next time Slaughter should lock Chyna in a cage. Well, it happened, but Chyna escaped at Unforgiven by bending the bars. Any other suggestions?

ERIC HYDE
DeKalb, IL

SHAME ON LEX!

Lex Luger showed the world what he is made of on *Nitro* when he allowed Bret Hart to interfere in the tag team title match in which The Giant and Scott Hall won the WCW belts from Sting and Kevin Nash. His cowardice cost Sting and Nash those belts. Lex Luger has never been a team player. He has always been a narcissist who could not be trusted.

Randy Savage must have been pulling his hair out when he saw no one come to Sting's aid after Hart distracted him. Where was the so-called "Total Package"? Lex Luger is poison, and the sooner The Wolfpac realizes it, the better off they will be.

RANDY CARTWRIGHT
Eddystone, PA

THE REAL REASON

I was just wondering if anybody else out there knows the real reason Vince McMahon hates Steve Austin. It has nothing to do with Austin's "colorful" language, flipping people the finger, or his disrespectful manner. The WWF boss hates "Stone-Cold" because he did the one thing no one else ever had: He caused McMahon to show his true face. The fact that behind the scenes, Vince McMahon is a manipulative, power-drunk, money-hungry corporate shark shouldn't be a surprise to anyone who knows anything about the business world. But in public, the only face he ever showed was this dorky, "Aw, shucks. I'm just a guy who loves the sport and got lucky enough to own the show" kind of mask. Hey, it fooled me, and I've been an avid fan for nearly 20 years.

It's really very simple. Whether or not Austin's bad attitude is right or wrong is beside the point. At least he's honest. I'll take a Texas rattlesnake over a Connecticut snake-oil salesman any time.

TAMMY TIDWELL
Pinson, AL

SALUTING SATURN

I would like to give my own personal "thumbs up" to Perry Saturn. Ever since he came to
(Continued on page 70)

THE Wrestler

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London Publishing Co.
P.O. Box 2029, Dept. 9
Marion, OH 43302

COVER DESIGN
Walt Schmidt

THE WRESTLER (ISSN: 1052-0899), Vol. 32, Number 12, is published monthly, with an additional issue in December, by London Publishing Co., 7002 W. Butler Pike, Ambler, PA 19002. Periodicals postage paid at Ambler, PA 19002 and additional post offices. Postmaster: Send change of address notices to: THE WRESTLER, P.O. Box 2029, Dept. 9, Marion, OH 43302. Single copy price \$3.50 (\$4.50 in Canada, £2.65 in U.K.). Subscription price \$29.20 for 13 issues in the U.S., \$39.60 in remaining countries. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES AND RATES: (215) 643-6385. U.S. and Canadian distribution by Kable News Inc., 641 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10022. International distribution by Worldwide Media Service Inc., 115 East 23rd St., New York, NY 10010. U.K. distribution by Comag, Tavistock Rd., West Drayton, Middlesex UB77QE, England. Printed in U.S.A.

WHAT'S

Happëning

By Bill Apter

HOLLYWOOD HOGAN IS trying his hardest to get the WCW World title back from **Bill Goldberg**, but he's not doing so in any arena or in any ring. He's doing it in a boardroom. Hogan and his attorney, **Henry Holmes**, have met with the WCW Executive Committee several times in an attempt to have the belt returned to Hogan based on this reasoning:

The bout between Hogan and Goldberg originally was to have taken place after the July 6 edition of *Nitro* at the Georgia Dome went off the air. More significantly, the contract that both wrestlers signed several weeks before the event specified that it would be a *non-title* match.

"We took Mr. Hogan's grievance under consideration and came to a very quick and decisive conclusion," **J.J. Dillon**, head of the Executive Committee told me. "Our matchmakers came to me a few days before the event and suggested

the match be televised and the title be at stake. I personally went to Mr. Hogan, who didn't seem bothered in the least by the suggestion. He did feel, however, that Mr. Goldberg had not yet beaten anyone of championship caliber and stipulated that he would agree to the matchmakers' terms only if Mr. Goldberg could

defeat a top member of the NWO earlier in the evening.

"**Scott Hall** was *handpicked* by Mr. Hogan, and Mr. Goldberg cleanly defeated him. Mr. Hogan was, at that point, forced to uphold his end of the agreement. Had he refused, we would have had the option of stripping him of the title. This is an open and shut case as

far as the Executive Committee is concerned. Bill Goldberg can only lose the WCW World heavyweight championship if he is defeated in the ring."

Said Holmes: "No addendum had been signed by my client to legally change terms of the existing original contract. We will continue to pursue this matter."

With his in-ring future in doubt due to serious injuries to his back, **Shawn Michaels** returned to the WWF in the role of guest broadcaster and surprised everyone when he warmly greeted the members of **DeGeneration X**, **Hunter Hearst Helmsley**, **X-Pac**, **Billy Gunn**, **Jesse James**, and **Chyna**. It was widely believed that Shawn was furious at Helmsley since "Triple-H" harshly criticized him in recent months.

"I'm not hot at anyone," Michaels said. "The



Hollywood Hogan doesn't have that WCW World title belt around his waist, and he's angry about it! His attorney's efforts to have the championship returned to him have been unsuccessful.



Shawn Michaels sure looks like he is having a good time working as a broadcaster for the WWF. He claims there is no ill-will between he and Hunter Hearst Helmsley. You can believe that's true if you want to.

Ogawa won the vacant Pacific Wrestling Federation junior heavy-weight title by beating **Satoru Asako** in a tournament final, while **Shiro Koshinaka** and **Genichiro Tenryu** defeated **Masa Chono** and **Hiro-yoshi Tenzan** to become the new IWGP tag team champions.

Christian Cage has ended the 19-month reign of East Coast Wrestling Association heavyweight champion **Glen Osbourne**. Osbourne's manager, **The Master**, has since severed all his ties to Osbourne, saying, "Had he listened to my advice on how to wrestle Cage, he would still be champion. Glen Os-

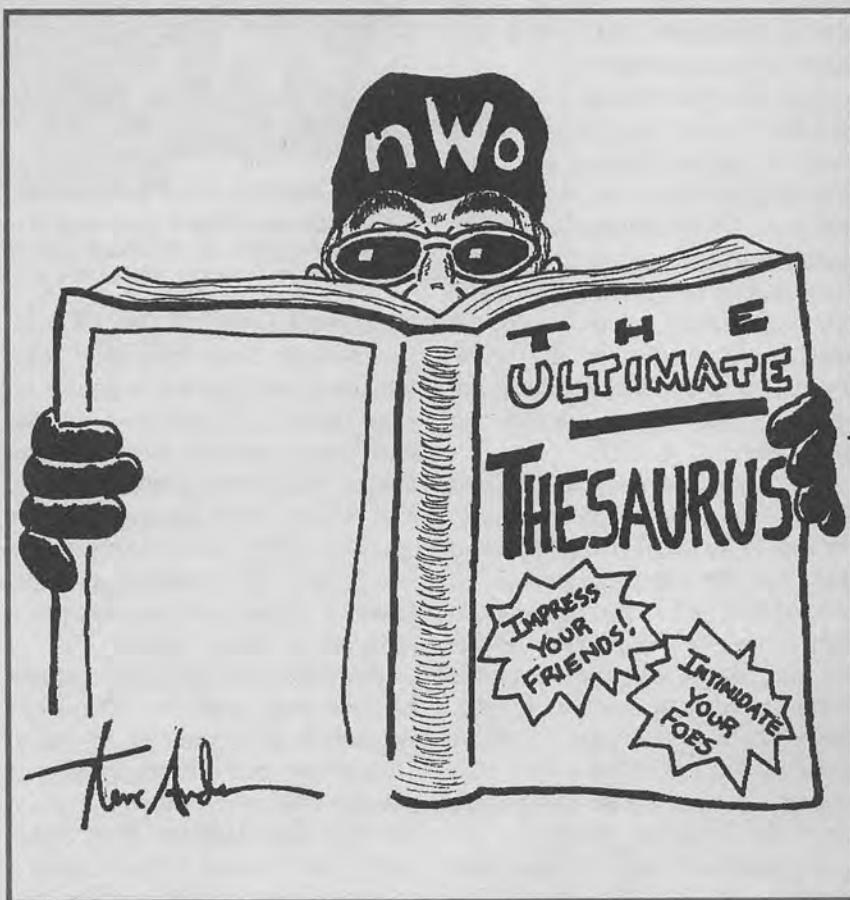
(Continued on page 71)

WWF called and asked me to sit in at the broadcast table, and I'm having a great time. It was great to see Hunter and the gang. Hell, I'm proud of what he's done with DX, and if I ever put on the tights again, I'm sure he and I will mesh just as perfectly as we did before. If you're looking for a story that the two of us want to kill each other, you're not going to find it here."

That might be Shawn's public stance on the DX situation, but I know Shawn Michaels very well, and Hunter's criticism of him several months ago is eating away at him. If Shawn is able to get back into the ring, I sincerely believe he and Helmsley will battle for control of DX. I know Shawn still thinks he is the rightful leader of the group and that Helmsley is merely his underling.

In other news involving "Triple-H," **D-Lo Brown** got an assist from **Rocky Maivia** to capture the WWF European title from him in July. Don't even try to tell D-Lo that his victory was at all tainted. "The Rock" just helped me out before **Chyna** had a chance to interfere on Hunter's behalf," he said ... Two major title changes in Japan: **Yoshinari**

Steve Anderson's View



NO HÖLDS Barred

with Steve Anderson

"ROCK 'N' WRESTLING" ushered in a resurgence in the popularity of professional wrestling. Smoke-filled arenas filled primarily with men were replaced with brightly lit arenas filled with men that had their families in tow. When the inevitable happened and the craze died down, many were of the opinion that the mania that defined wrestling in the '80s could never be replicated.

Fast forward to today. The mania has been replicated many times over. Cable ratings are sky-high. Pay-per-view buy rates are through the roof. Merchandise sales are reaching levels equivalent to some countries' gross national product. When something is fashionable, the fans are just not your ordinary run-of-the-mill individuals. Mainstream celebrities and athletes are cheering and booing just as loud.

Lately the celebrities have crossed the ring barriers to get more active in the sport they follow. That has had a piper effect as the celebrities are bringing their fans to the arenas and in front of the television. These celebrities are credited with the resurgence in the popularity of wrestling. Maybe. Maybe not. It does bring up a difficult question. Are the non-wrestlers truly helping or harming the long-term health of professional wrestling?

WCW prides itself on a deep roster of talent, and it has every right to



Mike Tyson generated a great deal of interest in WrestleMania XIV, but he was not used by the WWF as an active competitor. Building on the momentum partially attributable to Tyson's involvement, the WWF's popularity has soared.

boast. Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage, Kevin Nash, Scott Hall, Bret Hart, Sting, and Lex Luger encompass but a small portion of its personnel. Yet, the main events and high profile matches feature names like Dennis Rodman, Karl Malone, Kevin Greene, and now Jay Leno. They are only temporaries in a group of permanent employees. However, the lion's share of the attention goes to the true "outsiders."

Wrestlers who currently wrestle for either major promotion have toiled for years to get where they are today. They longed for the bright spotlight of pay-per-view, main event matches. Men like Dean Malenko, Eddy Guerrero, and Juventud Guerrera are tremendously talented wrestlers, but

have had to take a back seat to men who are not even experienced enough to be called rookies.

The WWF has used celebrities, but primarily in non-wrestling roles. Mr. T and Lawrence Taylor competed as wrestlers, Mike Tyson donned the black-and-white, and Cyndi Lauper had a stint as a manager. Most of the other celebs have stayed in the background, serving as ring announcers, timekeepers, and color commentators.

Over the past few months, the WWF has virtually ignored any superstar that is not in the business, while WCW trots out a new famous face week after week. Who has suc-

(Continued on page 74)

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THE GOLDBERG ERA has begun. The New World Order's time has come and gone. There is a new hierarchy in WCW.

Bold statements? I admit they are. Don't get me wrong. The NWO, both Hollywood and Wolfpac branches, still wield plenty of influence. NWO Hollywood, in particular, is experiencing a dramatic resurgence. In one fell swoop—on July 20, 1998, to be precise—the Hollywood faction became the most dominant supergroup in WCW, far surpassing the Wolfpac.

Scott Hall and The Giant's capture of the World tag team title, along with Bret Hart's victory over Dallas Page for the vacant U.S. belt, solidify NWO Hollywood as a major player in board room meetings and gives WCW President Eric Bischoff more leverage than ever. Meanwhile, the group has proven, by its methods and results, that it may emerge as the dominant NWO branch—relegating the Wolfpac movement to a mere uprising.

Does this mean the federation returns to the status quo of July 1996?

No way.

There's a huge roadblock on NWO Hollywood's path to former glory. His name is Bill Goldberg. And, like a monster standing upon a mountain, he is daring NWO Hollywood to take another step. He has defeated NWO Hollywood's best in record time with no controversy.

Scott Norton? Average time: four minutes. Curt Hennig? Average time: five minutes. Scott Hall? Average time: six minutes. The Giant? Average time: eight minutes. Hollywood Hogan? Average time: nine minutes.

I was very surprised by Goldberg's WCW World title win over Hogan on July 6. I thought he was still years away from being a world champion. In last month's column, I declared that Hogan would never be upended by the Wolfpac. Just 30 days ago, I didn't consider Goldberg part of the equation.

Although Hogan calls Goldberg a "paper champion," there seems to be no confidence within the group that any of them can actually regain the title. Of course, Hogan isn't anx-

ious for anyone to become World champion other than himself and his cohorts are probably less loyal than ever before.

Where does that leave WCW?

Fortunately, the federation can probably go back to life before 1996. One World champion without the backing of a seventhug hit squad. No one in WCW seems to have much of a chance of defeating Goldberg, but at least wrestlers no longer compete in a Mafia-type environment in which the word "challenger" is synonymous with "NWO target." That, in itself, will greatly improve morale in WCW. And, if World title matches themselves are no longer hotly contested, the competition between wrestlers to earn a title shot should be more intense than ever.

Who stands to benefit from Goldberg's ascension? Wrestlers of his own generation do.

For years, it was thought WCW's thirty-somethings would eventually dominate the scene. Those men would include Sting, Lex Luger, Kevin Nash, Scott Hall, and Curt Hennig. But it turned out these men were too evenly matched against forty-somethings like Hogan, Randy Savage, Roddy Piper, and Ric Flair.

WCW's "third generation," however, has accumulated enough experience and gained enough political clout to grab the torch once destined for the Stings, Lugers, and

Nashes. Goldberg's dramatic rise to prominence has forced everyone to take a second look at the stars once deemed mid-carders: Booker T, Chris Jericho, Chris Benoit, Eddy Guerrero, Raven, Perry Saturn, and Marcus Bagwell.

They must forget about jealous brothers, squabbling over loopholes, reforming long-dead cliques, and dealing with crazy nephews. Forget about the television and cruiserweight belts. Stop settling for being second- or even third-best. Goldberg has broken through the NWO Hollywood/Wolfpac deadlock and surpassed the "superstars" of each faction. It's time for WCW's third generation to seize its rightful status. □



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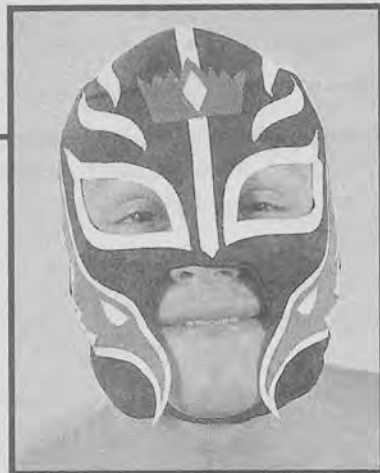
Thumbs Up to Bill Goldberg. The man is amazing. He's also a rookie. He's also the WCW World heavyweight champion. Goldberg, who has become the most popular man in WCW, destroyed Hollywood Hogan for the WCW World title, but he didn't stop there. No, Goldberg wasn't satisfied with that big victory. He just kept on winning, beating Scott Hall twice in one week, and destroying Curt Hennig several times. Goldberg clearly has in abundance what so many other wrestlers in WCW lack: Killer instinct. Drive. A hunger for greatness. He's not only the best wrestler in WCW. He is WCW.



Thumbs Up to Steve Austin. Everybody loses. Even the greatest wrestlers in history lost. Ric Flair lost. Bruno Sammartino lost. Hulk Hogan lost in the 1980s. Now he loses all the time. Steve Austin, who won the WWF World title at WrestleMania XIV, lost the belt to Kane at King of the Ring. But he coaxed a reluctant Vince McMahon and Paul Bearer to give him a rematch the next night at *Raw*, and he took advantage of the situation. Wrestling like a true champion, Austin regained the belt after escaping Kane's "tombstone" piledriver. Bouncing back from defeat is the mark of a true champion. Austin apparently has what it takes.



Thumbs Up to Tully Blanchard. From now on, The Four Horsemen should always be referred to in the past tense, and nobody explained why better than former Horseman Blanchard. After winning the New Dimension Wrestling title from Buddy Landell, Blanchard said, "I think Arn Anderson is doing the right thing by not getting this thing back together. Sometimes there comes a time when you just have to move on." Exactly. Move on. Don't mess with a great legacy. In the 1980s, the Horsemen were the most powerful force in wrestling. They were what the NWO would later become. But those days are gone.



Thumbs Up to Rey Misterio Jr. Yeah, it was a crying shame that Dean Malenko's interference cost Misterio a WCW cruiserweight title victory over Chris Jericho. But you have to admire Misterio, who had been sidelined for six months with a torn ACL after Jericho smashed his left knee with a toolbox at Souled Out. Misterio substituted for Malenko at Bash at the Beach and wrestled brilliantly. "I waited six months to get my hands on that Jericho," Misterio said. "Every workout, all the rehab, it all paid off tonight." Misterio looked great and wrestled great. He has more guts than Jericho will ever have.

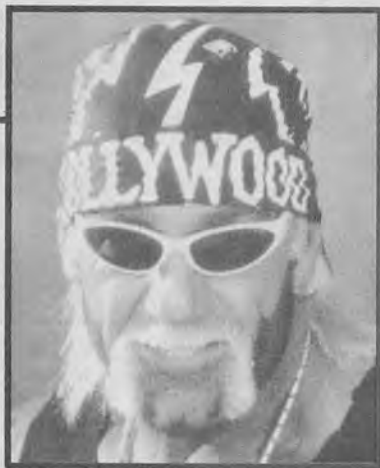
THUMBS Down



Thumbs Down to Dean Malenko. We understand Malenko's anger with Chris Jericho. Undoubtedly, Jericho has acted like an insensitive child toward Malenko and has gone so far as to insult Malenko's late father. But two wrongs don't make a right. In our opinion, Malenko owes Rey Misterio Jr. a big apology for costing him the WCW cruiserweight title at Bash at the Beach. Misterio won the match, but not before Malenko interfered. And because Malenko had already been suspended, Jericho was given back the belt. "I have tremendous respect for the rules," Malenko insisted. He sure fooled us.



Thumbs Down to Lance Storm. Now who's the bad guy? Looks to us like it's Lance Storm, who in recent months has turned the tables on tag team partner Chris Candido. At first, it was The Triple Threat—Candido, Bam Bam Bigelow, and Shane Douglas—that was snubbing Storm, but now it's Storm who's copping an attitude. He blamed Candido when they lost the ECW tag team belts. Now he's refusing Candido's attempts at a reconciliation. Storm walked out on Candido during a title match against tag champs Rob Van Dam and Sabu, and Candido got pinned. Our advice to Candido: Forget about Lance Storm.



Thumbs Down to Hollywood Hogan. Truer words were never spoken than those uttered by Hogan after he and Dennis Rodman defeated "Diamond" Dallas Page and Karl Malone. "That Malone's the biggest crybaby I've ever heard. We beat them one-two-three in the middle of the ring. Nobody can beat Hollywood and 'Rodzilla' with The Disciple watching our backs." Indeed. Hogan has no chance of winning *any* match these days without help from his NWO Hollywood pals. If The Disciple hadn't executed his "Apocalypse" diamond cutter on Page, Hogan and Rodman probably wouldn't have won. Justice was not served.



Thumbs Down to Paul Ellering. What a jerk. "Precious" Paul will always be remembered best for his association with The Road Warriors. But on wrestling's historical timeline, he is merely a blip, a footnote, an afterthought. And it's going to stay that way. The nerve of Ellering to turn against Hawk and Animal, the wrestlers who made him rich. He attacked LOD 2000 at *Raw*, then joined forces with Disciples of the Apocalypse. Skull and Eight-Ball might be on a hot streak now, but history proves Hawk and Animal are always dangerous ... especially when they're mad. Watch out, Ellering. You're in big trouble.

CORRESPONDENTS

Repöörts

San Diego, CA (Correspondent—Dutch Krewda): The entire sports world tuned into WCW's Bash at the Beach pay-per-view to see Karl Malone team up with "Diamond" Dallas Page to square off against Dennis Rodman and Hollywood Hogan. Unfortunately for Malone, his wrestling debut was not a success.

Heated rivals in the NBA, Malone and Rodman were anxious to get a chance to wrestle each other. After sizing each other up for about two minutes, Rodman and Malone locked up, with Rodman catching Malone in a headlock. Malone easily escaped the hold, though, and Rodman bailed from the ring. After gingerly climbing back into the ring, Rodman tagged Hogan. Hogan flexed at Malone, but that didn't intimidate "The Mailman," who just flexed back at him.

Before they could lock up, Malone tagged Page. Hogan then tagged in Rodman, who got thrown to the mat by DDP. Page kept the advantage the entire time he and Rodman were in the ring. Although Rodman hasn't had much training, he did execute two nice leapfrogs. "The Worm" didn't fare too well, though, when he tried to ram his body into Page. He was sent bouncing to the mat for his efforts.

Later, after Hogan and Malone tagged in, Rodman joined Hollywood in a double-team attack on Malone. Finally, after several minutes, "The Mailman" made the tag to Page, who quickly beat on both of his NWO Hollywood foes. Page leveled Hogan with a top-rope clothesline before being overpowered by his opponents.



It took a while, but NBA rivals Karl Malone and Dennis Rodman finally did lock up in the main event at Bash at the Beach. Neither man was involved in the pinfall, however.

As Hogan tried for his legdrop, Page rolled out of the way, then tagged Malone. After slamming both Hogan and Rodman, he signalled for the "Diamond cutter" as he tagged DDP. Page executed the move on Hogan, but Rodman broke up the pinfall attempt. Malone then nailed Rodman with a "Diamond cutter" of his own. While referee Charles Robinson tried to clear the ring of the illegal men, The Disciple ran in and hit Page with an "Apocalypse," his

version of a "Diamond cutter." Disciple then placed Hogan on top of Page and left the ring so Robinson could count the pinfall.

In other bouts: Raven defeated Perry Saturn ... Juventud Guerrera pinned Billy Kidman ... Rey Misterio Jr. pinned WCW cruiserweight champion Chris Jericho to win the title ... Stevie Ray defeated Chavo Guerrero Jr. when Chavo submitted as Ray shook his hand ... Eddy

(Continued on page 76)

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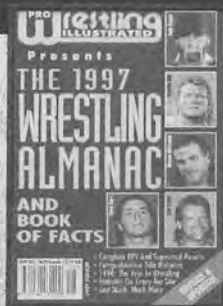
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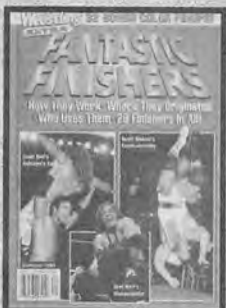
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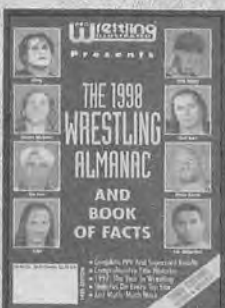
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YOU Asked Us

Q: "I have a question for Dan Severn: Dan, everybody talks about a match between you and Ken Shamrock because you guys were enemies in the UFC. But you recently accompanied Shamrock to the ring, only to walk away from him after he was blindsided by Owen Hart. Are you guys friends, enemies, or what?"—Laura Branton, St. Louis, MO

A: "Ken Shamrock and I are what you would call respectful enemies," Severn replied. "It's kind of hard to warm up to a guy who's tried to end your career. In the WWF, guys like Ken, Steve Blackman, and myself are often lumped together because of our backgrounds, but we're not friends by any means. I have tremendous respect for Shamrock as an athlete, but that's as far as it goes. If he gets in my way, he'll get hurt bad. If the WWF signs us to wrestle as a team, I'll do my part to win, but I will not extend myself beyond that. That means I don't talk to him or warm up with him or even communicate with him."

...

Q: "My question is for former WCW TV champion Dave 'Fit' Finlay: 'Fit,' you are an international star who wrestles on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Do you find the competition tougher in Europe or in North America?"—Matthew Heades, Tulsa, OK

A: "The competition is lame all over!" Finlay bellowed. "In



NWA champ Dan Severn has a lot of respect for Ken Shamrock, but he adds that he and Shamrock should *never* be called friends.

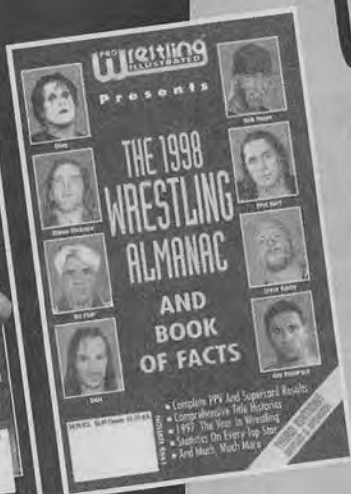
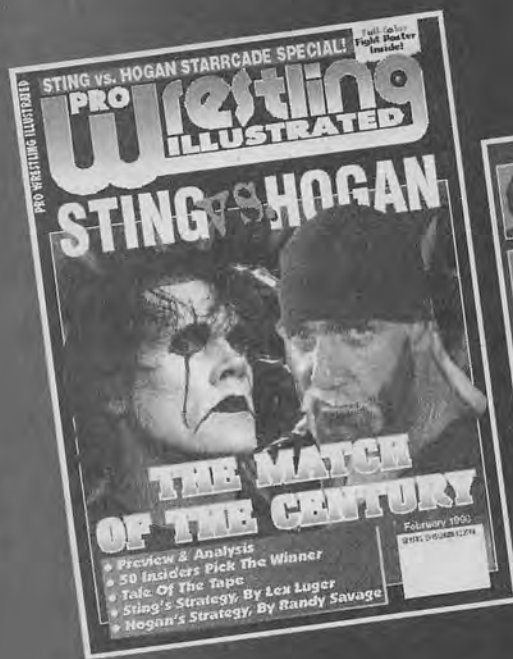
fact, I got tired of defending that TV belt against such lousy opposition. If WCW can't put me up against real wrestlers who can push me to greater heights or at least test my skills, I don't care if I don't have the belt. Not that the competition is any better back home in Europe. But it's good to go home and beat up the local boys every now and then. And then when I get tired of doing that, I come back to WCW. It's a vicious cycle, I know, but I guess that's the price you gotta pay for being great."

...

Q: "I would like to ask 'Diamond' Dallas Page why he chose Karl Malone to be his tag team partner at Bash at the Beach."—Troy Leary, Detroit, MI

A: "Basically, Troy, I knew 'The Mailman' would be jacked to get in the ring with 'The Worm,'" DDP replied. "Especially after that NBA playoff series. Him and Dennis Rodman were, like, a whisker away from going at it. So I knew Karl would be pumped. The second reason is that Malone is a great athlete who could learn some wrestling moves very quickly. I meant it when I said that Karl wouldn't embarrass himself in the ring. Sure, he lost his cool after the match, but that's just because he hates losing. I was pretty steamed, too. Hey, the black and white pulled one over on us, but that's okay because Rodman, Hogan, and The Disciple will get theirs real soon. Mark my words."

(Continued on page 77)



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Introducing

By Michael Culpepper

SCOTT D'AMORE

MANY WRESTLING FANS respect pro jocks for blowing off part of training camp and pounding the canvas for a pay-per-view.

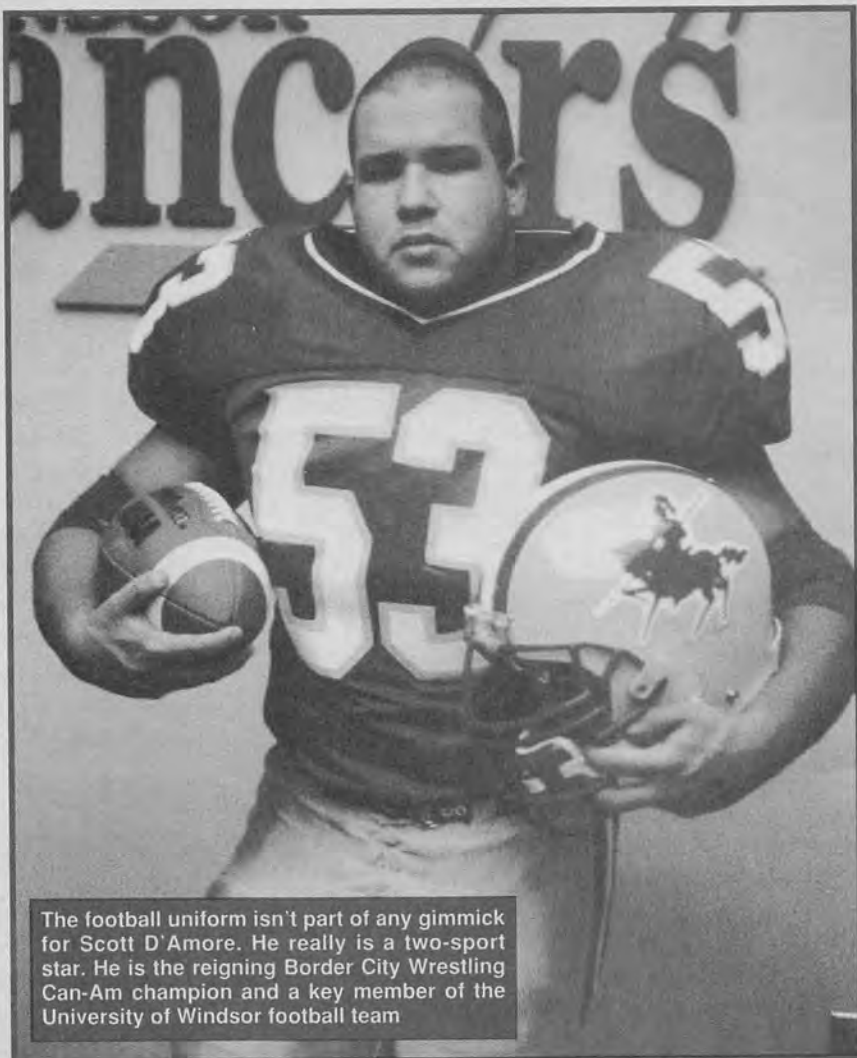
Coaches don't like it, however.

Well, not many coaches, anyway. The situation with Border City Wrestling Can-Am champ Scott D'Amore is different. D'Amore plays college football at the University of Windsor, and not only does his coach, Mike Morencie, condone his mid-season title defenses—he *encourages* them.

"This was the same guy who gave me an ultimatum two years ago—quit wrestling or quit football," said D'Amore, a defensive lineman and long-snap specialist. "I don't do ultimatums, especially not from some football coach."

The two-sport star originally left college football to tackle both the WWF and the WCW, and though he hasn't yet become a star in either federation, he did make an appearance at 1995's Great American Bash in Dayton, Ohio. Upon returning to his native Ontario, D'Amore was asked by Morencie to take another shot at college football. D'Amore obliged, splitting time between practice and the Canadian independent circuit.

Now the team cashes in on his popularity with wrestling and football doubleheaders. Fans carry "D'Amore 3:16" signs to Windsor games—fitting for a 23-year-old man who has already wrestled such superstars as Steve Austin and Ric Flair.



The football uniform isn't part of any gimmick for Scott D'Amore. He really is a two-sport star. He is the reigning Border City Wrestling Can-Am champion and a key member of the University of Windsor football team

It's not at all unusual for an up-and-coming wrestler to have to find ways to balance his career on the mat with a full-time job. Scott D'Amore's problem is different. He can only wrestle when he isn't playing college football!

D'Amore ties up Johnny Swinger, who has also had limited success in WCW. But D'Amore, a six-year veteran, is only 23. He is very confident that his best days are ahead of him.



D'Amore made his pro debut at 17, circumventing Canada's minimum-age requirement by using his older brother's name. His victory over Canadian veteran Otis Apollo caught the attention of WCW,

and the promotion quickly signed him to compete in the United States. But the transition from the independent circuit to the "big show" rattled the young 6', 250-pounder.

"When you're a 20-year-old kid and Arn Anderson sticks four fingers in your face, it's easy to choke," D'Amore said. "I was young. I made mistakes. But that's part of learning your way through the business. What I have learned the last few years is going to take me a long way in this sport. I won't make the same mistakes again."

D'Amore even sought the help of Apollo to test the tag team division. But The Canadian Bad Boys fell victim to Harlem Heat and The American Males at several shows. They met a similar fate while moonlighting in the WWF, where they succumbed to the Steiners.

A broken arm forced D'Amore to take a break from competition, but it wasn't enough to keep him out of the ring. While he was recovering, D'Amore befriended Al Snow and trained at his Body-slamers Gym in Ohio. There he learned under veteran Mickey Doyle and even worked with Ultimate Fighter Dan "The Beast" Severn, an expert in numerous submission holds.

Promoters took notice, and D'Amore received invitations for tryouts in promotions from Philadelphia to Europe. At the 1995 World Cup of Wrestling in Germany, the cocky Canadian placed fifth out of 16, and his stock rose again.

But a brief stop home confronted D'Amore once again with his storied past—his football career.

"I was watching the U of Windsor team from the stands with my friends and a couple Steve-weisers," D'Amore said, "and these two water boys came up and said, 'Coach wants to see you. He says he wants you to suit up again. Says he'll even let you keep the wrestling.'"

Since then, D'Amore has been courted by several CFL and NFL teams interested in his long-snapping services. He insists that his special teams abilities are "without equal." His ring record has also improved since he returned to football. The difference, according to D'Amore, is confidence.

"I have the NFL and Canadian teams whispering in one ear, and the entire wrestling world whispering in the other," he said. "Since I've come back to Windsor, I've found perspective. I've discovered that I am the best

thing to happen to this city since Killer Kowalski was born. Nothing is standing in my way this time."

Nothing but The Jackyl perhaps. Recently, the bizarre WWF manager, a native of Canada himself, and his stable of "Oddities" have crossed paths with D'Amore at various independent shows. And the results have been bloody.

"He's a wrestling neophyte in need of indoctrination," The Jackyl said of D'Amore, "and Kurrigan can be quite persuasive. Just don't blame me for this bloodshed. I'm a pacifist until I'm provoked. Scott D'Amore provoked me."

But so far, no one from The Jackyl's stable has been able to wrest that Can-Am belt from D'Amore, and despite the fact that he has already been attacked by Jackyl and company several times, D'Amore doesn't seem particularly worried about them.

"It's just part of the business," he said. "I just put my head down and run 'em all over. I don't care if it's Kurrigan in the ring or some lineman charging at me on the field. Like the signs say, 'D'Amore 3:16. I just long-snapped your ...'"

Well, you know. □

PAUL ELLERING



RED AUERBACH AND the Boston Celtics. Tommy Lasorda and the Los Angeles Dodgers. Vince Lombardi and the Green Bay Packers. Okay, maybe we're getting a little carried away here with the comparisons, but the point needs to be made: There have been some great pairings of managers/coaches and teams in sports history. And in wrestling history, no pairing is more famous than Paul Ellering and The Road Warriors.

Ellering brought Hawk and Animal together, forming the most feared tag team in history. Four-time winners of *PWI's* Tag Team of the Year award. In one of those years, 1984, Ellering was named Manager of the Year.

Ellering, however, watched from the sidelines as this once-great tag team struggled through the 1990s. Only once in this decade have they even been runners-up for Tag Team of the Year. True, they won the WWF World tag team title last year but held it for less than two months.

So fast-forward to June 1998. LOD 2000, as Hawk and Animal are now known, are struggling under the management of Sunny. Here comes Ellering, ready to save the day for LOD 2000. Or so it seemed.

Instead, Ellering perpetrated an attack on LOD 2000 at the June 29 edition of *Raw* and watched with glee as The Disciples of Apocalypse, the team he now manages, beat the living daylights out of Hawk and Animal.

This shocking turn of events shook up the wrestling world—especially Hawk and Animal—and placed Ellering opposite the team he had made famous ... and made him famous in return. Senior Editor Bill Apter recently spoke with Ellering about this virtually incomprehensible change of heart.



be expected since they've been together for 15 years and haven't done anything special in a long, long time. So then they come to me and say, "Listen, Paul, we're thinking of taking Sunny as our manager." I told them it was a big mistake. They ignored me. I decided right there to cut my ties with them forever. *Forever!*

Q: Was that a difficult decision?

A: Easiest decision I've ever made.

Q: Really?

A: No, I'm lying to you, Apter. I told you. Easiest decision I've ever made. Put it this way: I've always led them down the proper path. I got them together, I made them famous, I wrote their game

Skull and Eight-Ball (left) have supplanted Hawk and Animal (shown in 1984, below) as Paul Ellering's charges. But can he bring the same success to The Disciples of Apocalypse that he brought to The Road Warriors? Big surprise: He says he can!

Q: Paul, I can't believe I'm sitting here talking to you about this.

A: Who cares? Go right ahead and leave then. I have other things to do.

Q: No, no, no. That's not what I meant. I mean, I can't believe we're discussing you turning against Hawk and Animal and joining The Disciples of Apocalypse.

A: Big deal. It's like I told that other guy from your magazine, Dave something or other.

Q: Rosenbaum?

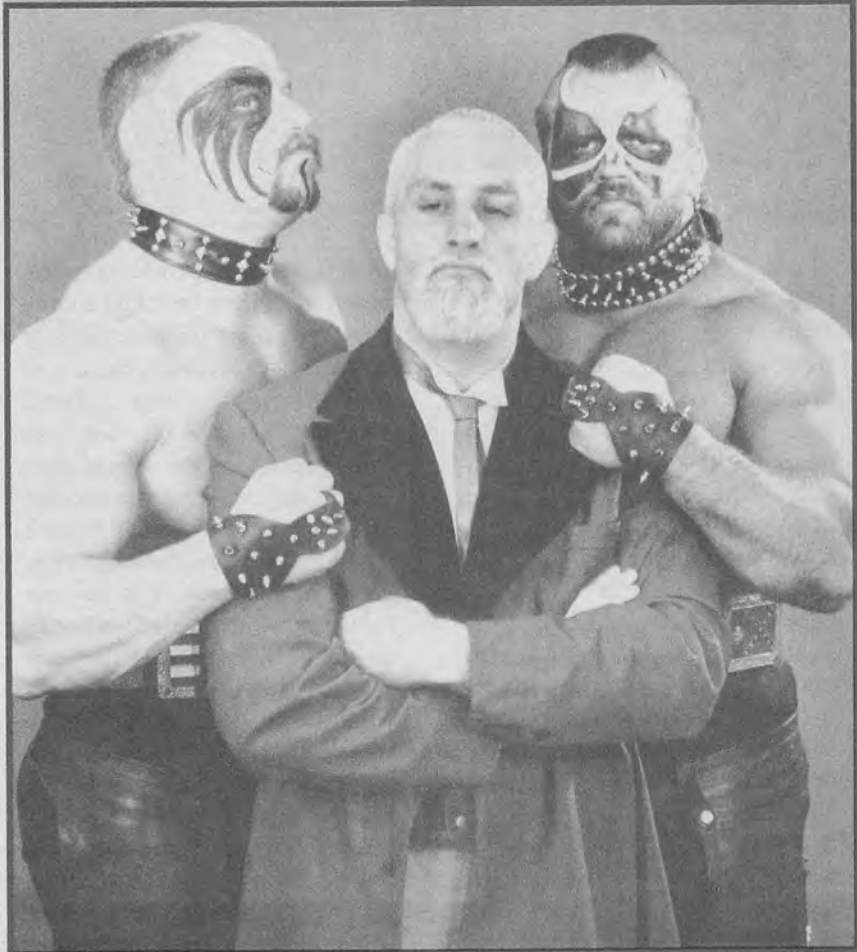
A: No. The other one.

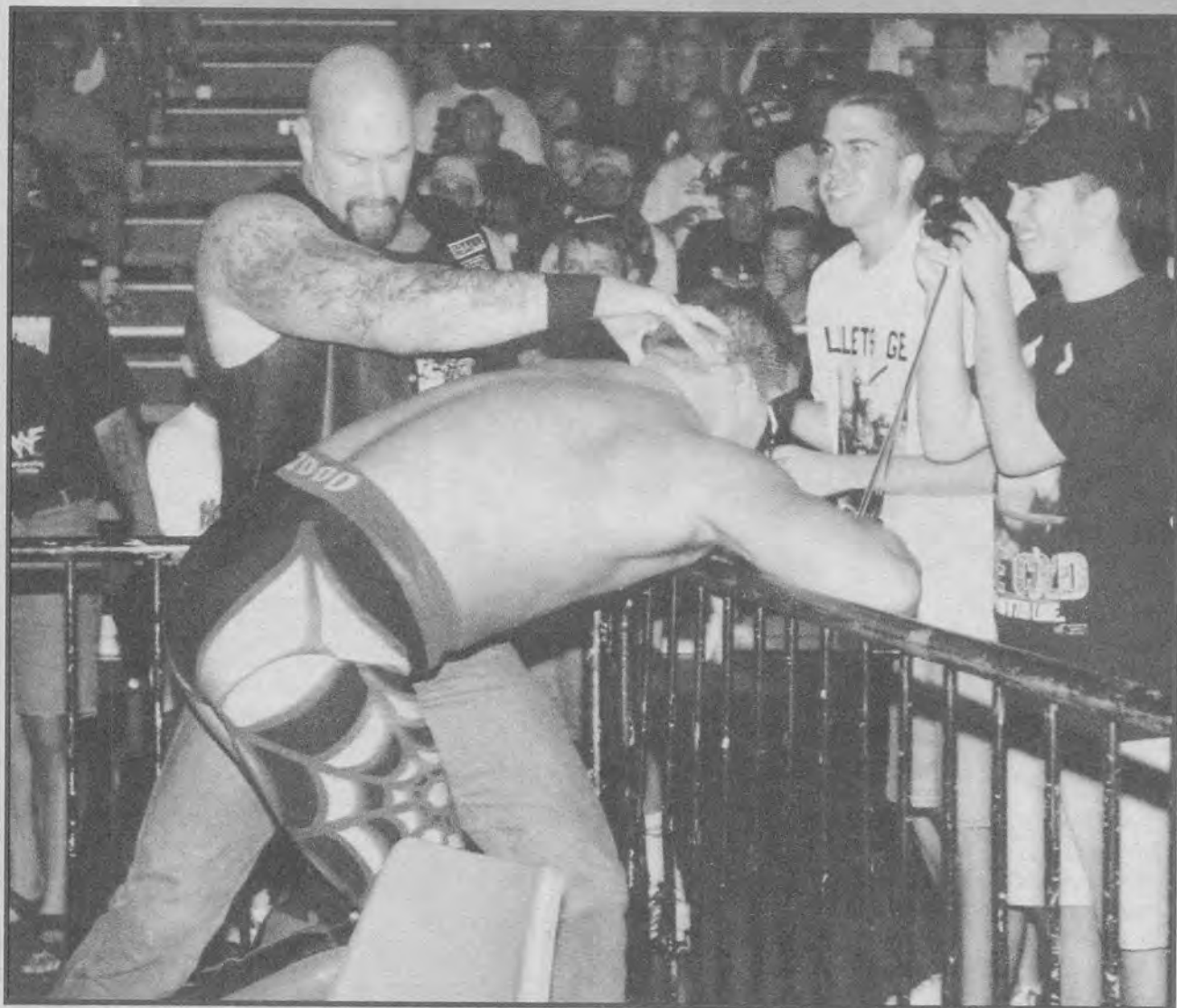
Q: Lenker?

A: Yeah, Lenker. This never would've happened if not for Hawk and Animal. They paved the way for my return, except the path took an unexpected turn. Right to the doorstep of the DOA.

Q: Maybe you should explain what you just said. I'm not sure all our readers read Dave Lenker's "On The Road" column in *Inside Wrestling*.

A: All right, here it is. The short version. Hawk and Animal aren't getting along, which is to





plans, I told them what to say and do. I made The Road Warriors into the most powerful force in wrestling history. The problem was, the two of them are both choke artists. They could never win the big one. Could you imagine that? Here they are, two of the biggest, strongest, most feared men in the sport, but what did they win, three or four world titles? It's disgraceful. Disgusting. And you guys in the media had a lot to do with it, because you kept on feeding into the myth. Four-time Tag Team of the Year in *PWI*. For what?

Q: Go on.

A: A few years ago, I told them to retire. I told them to let their legacy be and just get on with their lives. They wouldn't listen

to me. They had to keep going on, even though they had totally lost their killer instinct, nobody was afraid of them anymore, and they kept getting hurt. Idiots. Well, they ignored me then, and they ignored me the second time with Sunny, and that was the end of it. Then when Sunny wasn't working out, they thought they could get me back. You saw me talking to them before King of the Ring. They must've been crazy. Why should I go back to a washed-up pair of has-beens when I had the chance to manage Skull and Eight-Ball? The DOA is today's news. LOD 2000 is yesterday's news. What with this 2000? What's that, the year they're both gonna finally retire? The year their freshness expires?

They're not even gonna make it to the year 2000 the way they've been going.

Q: Yeah, especially if you keep trying to run them over with a motorcycle.

A: Had it coming to them.

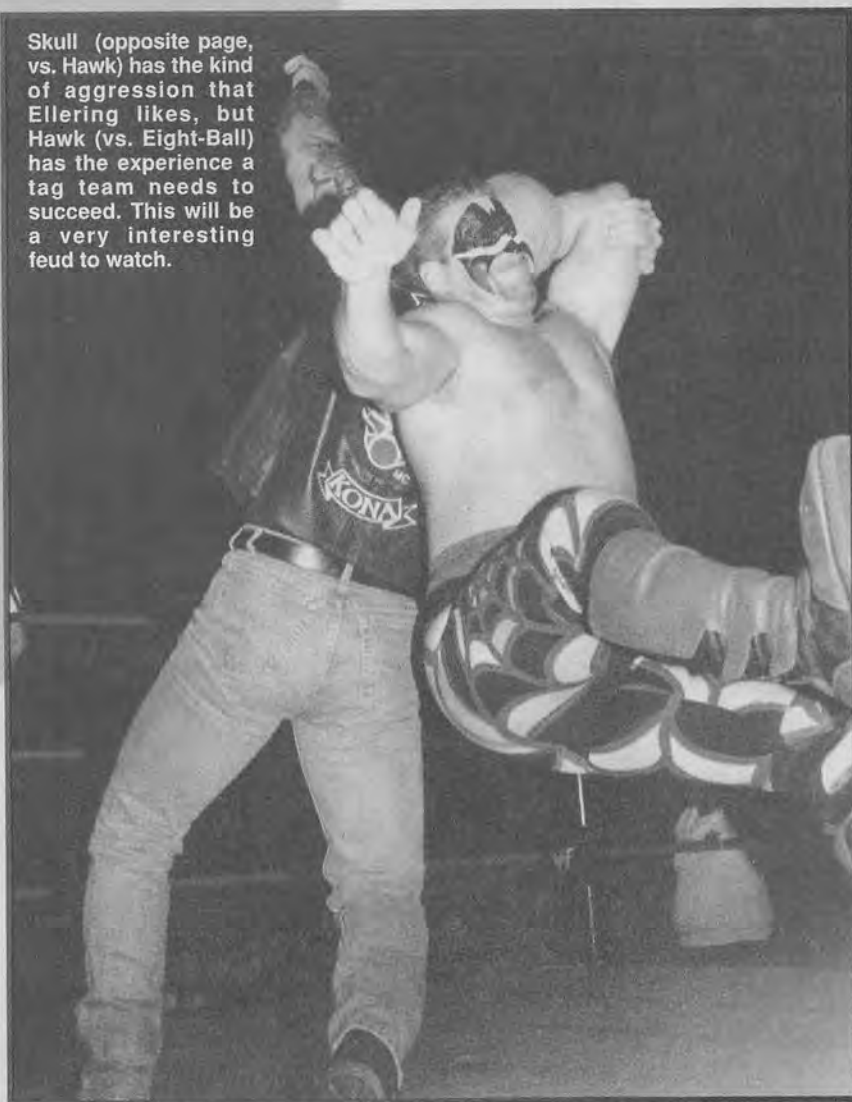
Q: How callous! How could you say that?

A: Because it's the truth. And if Hawk didn't decide at the last minute to save the day, I would've run right over Animal's leg right there on *Raw*. Millions of people would have seen it. But you'd better believe there'll be more chances, and I'll get them both next time.

Q: Why do you hate them so much? After all, you have such a long history together.

A: I hate them because they're

Skull (opposite page, vs. Hawk) has the kind of aggression that Ellering likes, but Hawk (vs. Eight-Ball) has the experience a tag team needs to succeed. This will be a very interesting feud to watch.



losers. What's worse, they're washed-up losers. Nothing worse in the world.

Q: But how about the DOA? They haven't exactly been tearing up the WWF, either.

A: What's wrong with you, Apter? You're not even reading your own magazine? The DOA never loses, especially to LOD 2000. Never. Not once since I got on board. And they're not going to, because I've got the secret weapon.

Q: Are you talking about your computer?

A: I'm talking about the Nietzsche of the Net.

Q: That's you.

A: That's me.

Q: And you've got this special program.

A: It's brilliant. I can pick any two opponents for Skull and Eight-Ball, and the program will design a way to beat them. It shows Skull and Eight-Ball wrestling the other two guys right there on the screen. That way my boys know what to do when they get in the ring with them for real. It never fails and never will fail. It's perfection.

Q: Can it work against Kane and Mankind?

A: Anybody.

Q: The New Age Outlaws?

A: You heard me. Anybody. No exceptions. All those years it took Hawk and Animal to win their first world tag team title. What was it, 10?

Q: More like five.

A: Seemed like 10. The DOA will get

theirs less than a year from now, now that I'm on board. I guarantee that. They'll be wearing those belts proudly, because they're the most feared and dangerous team in wrestling today. They're what the Warriors were 15 years ago, with one exception: They're winners. They're not going to blow their opportunities. They're not going to go down in history as the most overrated tag team ever.

Q: Do you really think that's the legacy of Hawk and Animal?

A: No doubt about it. Don't you?

Q: Well, no. I think people consider them one of and maybe the greatest team ever. They've always been feared.

A: Not anymore. Nobody fears Animal and Hawk anymore. They keep on changing everything. Their manager. Their clothes. Their look. What they oughta do is change their profession. Get into something that isn't so strenuous.

Q: Like computer programming?

A: Don't be smart, Apter, or I'll send the DOA after you.

Q: But, Paul, please. I know you too well. You must have some fond memories of your time with Hawk and Animal.

A: Some, but they go way back, maybe 10 years. Maybe that time we won the Crockett Cup. That was probably the highlight. But you know what? Hawk and Animal didn't win any belt that night, just some cup. Big deal. And they don't even have that tournament anymore, do they?

Q: No, they don't.

A: So there. You poll 100 fans and I'll wager not more than five have ever heard of the Crockett Cup. Hawk and Animal are relics. Washed-up relics. And by the time we get through with them, they'll be washed-up relics with broken legs.

Q: Sounds like you have a lot of pent-up aggression.

A: Maybe so. But not as much as the DOA has, Apter. Not nearly as much. □

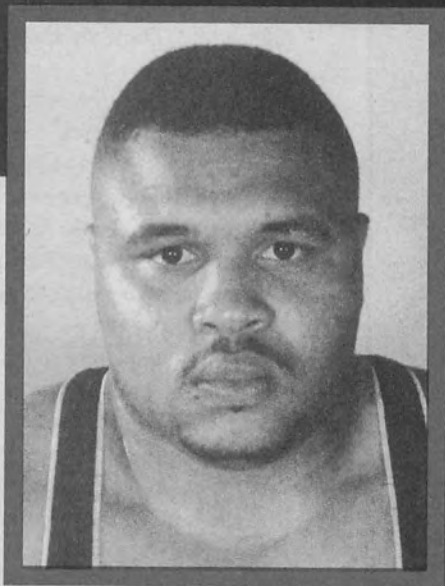
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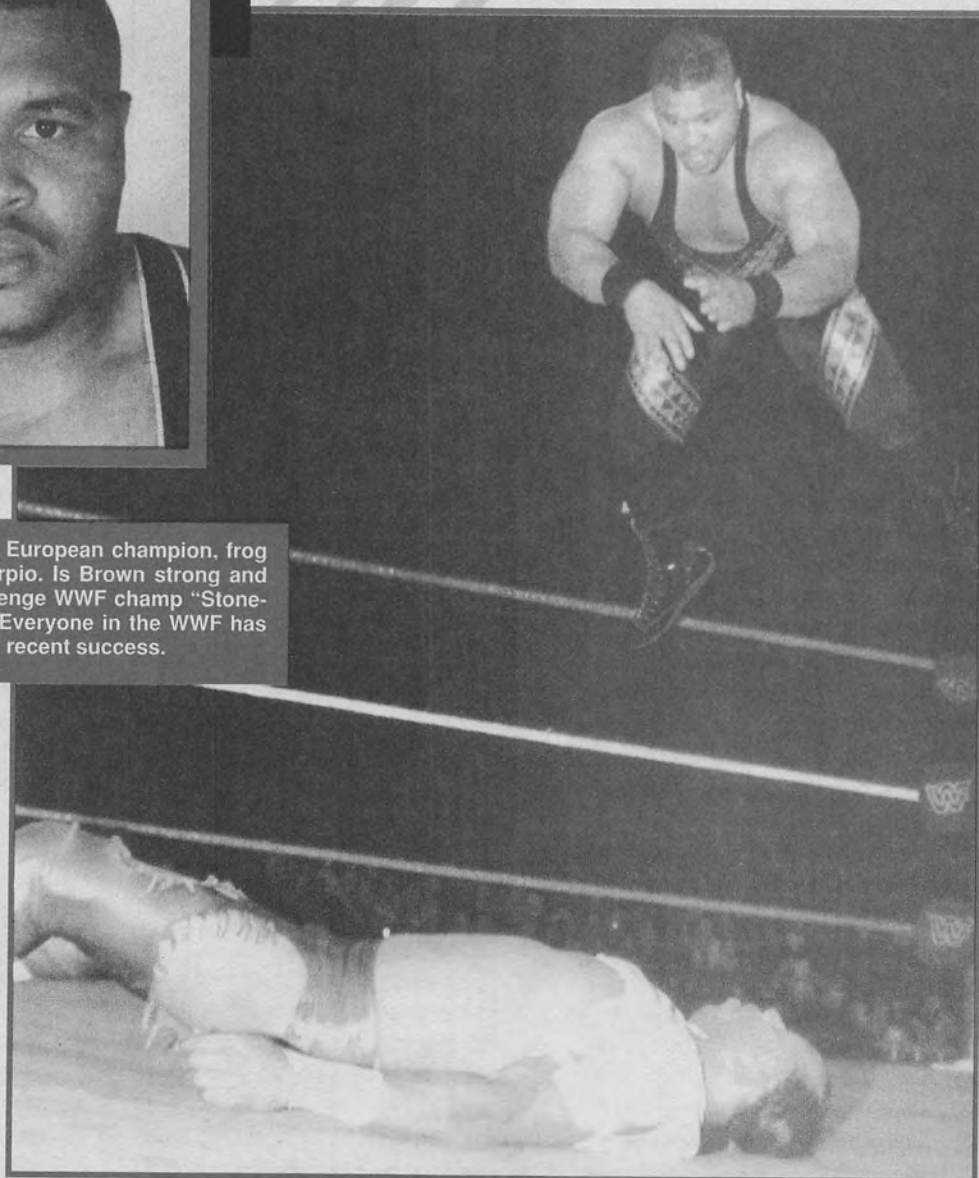
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PANEL EXAMINES

D-LO BROWN



D-Lo Brown, the new European champion, frog splashes 2 Cold Scorpio. Is Brown strong and agile enough to challenge WWF champ "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin? Everyone in the WWF has been surprised by his recent success.





CAPT. LOU ALBANO

"The Captain isn't too keen on D-Lo, brother, and I'll tell you why. He hasn't shown me very much heart out there. Brown never puts that European title of his on the line, and he's always running in on other people's matches. He's picked up some bad habits from that Nation. D-Lo needs to surround himself with better wrestlers and better people if he wants to succeed in the WWF in the long run. Faarooq would have been a better mentor for him, daddy."

Capt. Lou Albano, "The Guiding Light," has managed 13 different tag teams to a record 17 WWF World tag team titles.



FABULOUS MOOLAH

"I haven't really seen too much of D-Lo Brown in the ring, but whenever I do see him, he's usually up to somethin' sneaky—like interferin' in other people's matches. He better be careful about who he crosses in the WWF, hon, because he might need a favor one day. The wrestlin' business is strange because your enemies very often become your friends later on down the line. D-Lo better not make the wrong people mad at him, or things will be real tough for him."

Fabulous Moolah, the finest women wrestler in history, held the World title for 28 years. She now trains wrestlers in Columbia, South Carolina.



KILLER KOWALSKI

"I have to be honest with you: D-Lo Brown is just not my kind of wrestler. No, sir. Breaking the rules requires courage and guts. Brown has shown neither of those to me so far. He runs around in that chest protector acting like he's hurt, then hides behind Rocky Maivia and Kama and Mark Henry as soon as he gets into some trouble. He won't get to the next level playing tricks like that. Give me a week with him and I'd teach him what guts is all about."

Killer Kowalski, one of the most sadistic rule-breakers in the history of the sport, runs a wrestling school in Malden, Massachusetts.



OLE ANDERSON

"There's not very much going on in wrestling these days that pleases me, but it's always good to see a tough, hardworking underdog like this Brown make a name for himself. If I have a soft spot, it's for working stiff like Brown who get ahead by using their own two hands, not by playing up to the fans or strutting around like some pretty boy. Sure, Brown's got a lot to learn yet, but he's young, and The Nation will teach him all he needs to know soon enough."

Ole Anderson, a five-time former NWA World tag team champion and founding member of The Four Horsemen, has been retired for several years.



HARLEY RACE

"Although not many people in the WWF are ready to admit it, this kid D-Lo Brown is for real. He's caught a lot of people by surprise—including his friends in The Nation. He's very agile for someone his size, and I can see he's plenty strong. I just watched him toss Vader around on *Raw*, and I know as well as anybody that that's not easily done. The European title is the perfect belt for him at this stage of his young career. He should keep getting better."

Harley Race, an eight-time NWA World champion, also managed three-time WCW World champion and current WWF contender Vader.

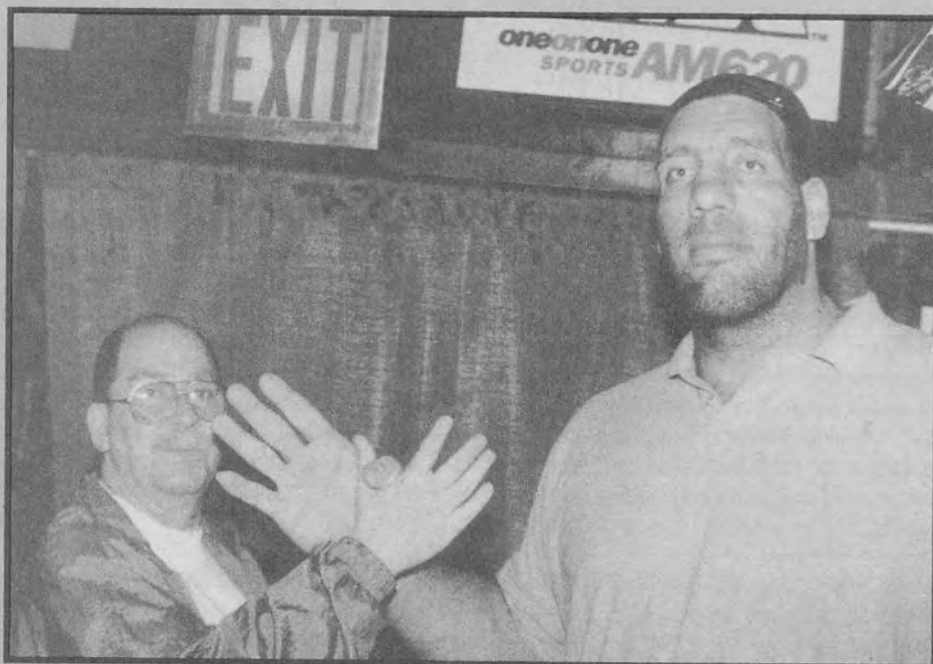


PAUL ORNDORFF

"Right now, D-Lo has the advantage of being kind of an unknown to many competitors in the WWF. Nobody really expected him to beat Helmsley for the European belt, but now everybody's looking over their shoulders. His opponents don't know what to expect. Is he a threat to Steve Austin? Maybe in time. Is he a flash in the pan? Could be. But one thing is certain: D-Lo Brown's career received a shot in the arm, and now is the time to take advantage of that."

Former WCW TV and World tag team champion Paul Orndorff retired from active competition after suffering a neck injury in December 1995.

THE SQUARED CIRCLE



▲ Long-time wrestling fan Elliot Maron compares hands with the new WWF giant, Paul Silva, prior to a recent card at Madison Square Garden. Looks like it would take about three of Maron's hands to equal one of Silva's.



▲ Caught red-handed! Our camera spotted NWO Hollywood head of security Vincent offering a bribe to referee Billy Silverman before a match on *Thunder*. We were not shocked to see that Silverman refused to accept it.

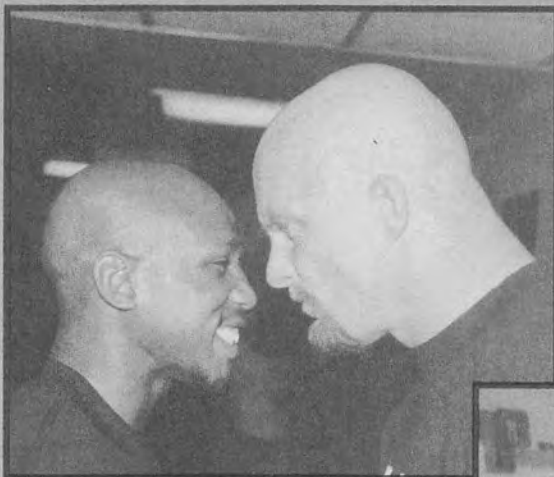


▲ Once again, Bobby "The Brain" Heenan has drawn the ire of his WCW broadcasting brethren Lee Marshall, Larry Zbyszko, and Mike Tenay. We're not sure what "pearls of wisdom" got these guys mad at Heenan this time.



▲ ECW announcer Joey Styles succumbs to a playful hug from Nicole Bass. Just because Styles wears a suit doesn't mean he is exempt from the same "affection" Bass shows other ECW competitors.

► International Boxing Federation bantamweight champion and lifelong wrestling fan Tim Austin looks pleased to meet current WWF World champ "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin, who isn't sharing in his namesake's good humor.



▲ With WCW constantly on tour, referee Mark Curtis rarely has time for a good meal. Curtis literally has to eat on the run. And he's usually running to the ring to call another main event match.

▼ Devon Storm poses with a fan at the Special Olympics Championship Games held at the University of Delaware's Bob Carpenter Center. Several ECWA wrestlers, including Cheetah Master and Glen Osbourne, attended the event.



▼ Former wrestler Reggie Parks puts the finishing touches on the WWF tag team belt he constructed. Reggie, whose workshop and home are in Tucson, Arizona, makes belts for federations around the world.



Spot Light N...

2 COLD SCORPIO

ALTHOUGH 2 COLD Scorpio is known primarily as an aerial specialist, the Denver native tries to incorporate a myriad styles and influences into his repertoire. Over the course of his 12-year career, Scorpio has picked up the high-flying influence of Mil Mascaras, the technical vein of Greg Gagne, and the smash-mouth techniques of Faarooq (Ron Simmons). His well-rounded attack has earned him success in Japan, Mexico, WCW, ECW, and the WWF.

Scorpio made his professional debut in 1986 after training for several months with independent wrestler Mike Starr. Fellow Colorado native Vader took notice of Scorpio and suggested he spend some time in Japan learning an aerial style from accomplished stars such as Kensuke Sasaki and Hiroshi Hase. He got his big break at WCW's Clash of the Champions XXI, when Ron Simmons asked him to fill in for his injured tag team partner, Robbie Walker. Scorpio won the match with a "Scorpio splash."

Scorpio went on to team regularly with Marcus Bagwell. The youngsters



struggled early on, but they upset WCW tag team champions The Nasty Boys on October 4, 1993. Unfortunately, they dropped the belts back to Jerry Sags and Brian Knobs just 20 days later. Bagwell and Scorpio never recaptured that championship feeling, and 2 Cold eventually left WCW for the "extreme" action of ECW in 1994.

At first, fans thought Scorpio might be too "soft" for ECW's "hardcore"

style, but his feuds with Taz, Sabu, and Shane Douglas proved them wrong.

Ultimately, the move to ECW proved rewarding for Scorpio, who captured the ECW TV belt for the first of four times when he beat Jason on November 4, 1994. He also won the ECW tag team belts with The Sandman on October 28, 1995.

Scorpio soon attracted the attention of Vince McMahon and began splitting time between ECW and the WWF, where he competed as Flash Funk for a brief period. He recently dropped the Flash Funk persona and usually just goes by Scorpio these days. Although he is a fan favorite

in the WWF, Scorpio hasn't been in the hunt for a singles title for quite some time. On the tag team front, he recently reunited with Simmons. They hope to make a run at the WWF tag team championship.

He might not have any gold to show off right now, but wherever Scorpio goes, he becomes a star. That's why we proudly feature him in this month's "Spotlight."



February 1993: Scorpio ties up the much larger Vinnie Vegas (Kevin Nash) with a leglock. Scorpio's mat skills complement his aerial ability very well. He is the epitome of a well-balanced wrestler.

August 1993: Years before Steve Austin became a huge star in the WWF, Scorpio used his high-flying skills to give him trouble in WCW. How would Scorpio fare in a showdown with Austin today?



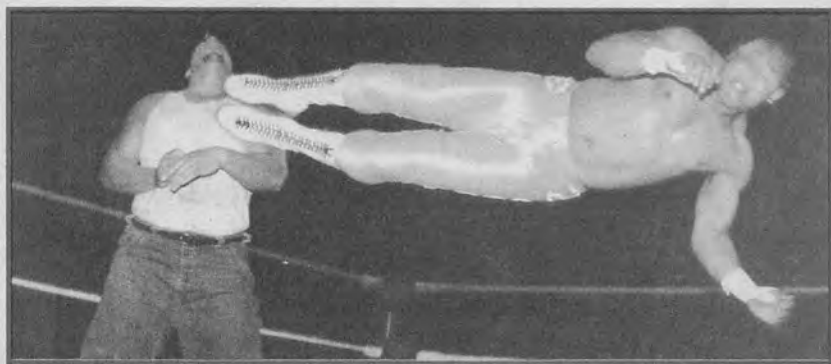
October 1993: Scorpio splashes Jerry Sags of The Nasty Boys. The WCW tag team title was Scorpio's first taste of gold. He and Marcus Bagwell defeated The Nasty Boys on October 4 but lost the belts just 20 days later.



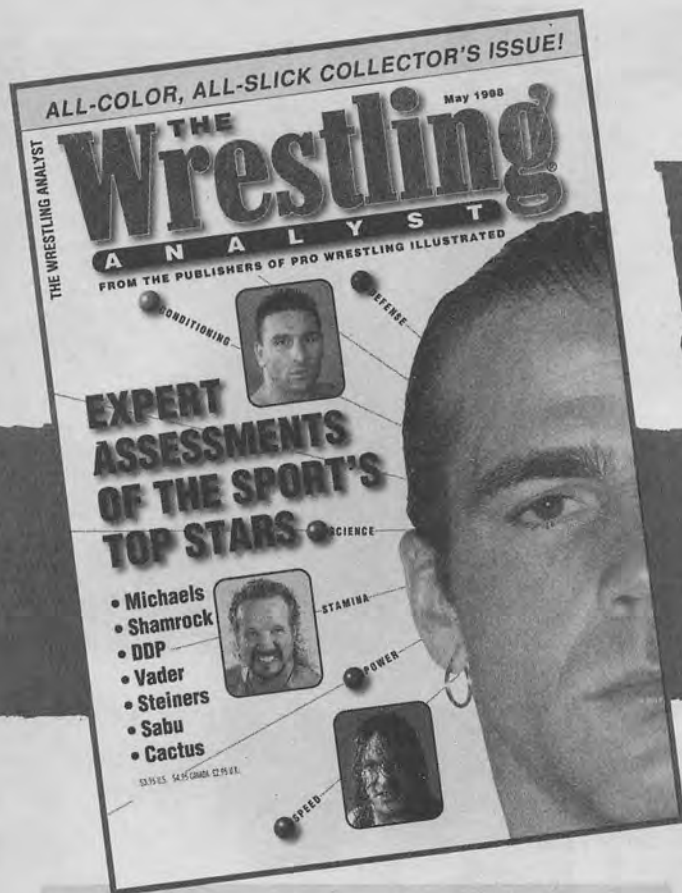
May 1995: In a battle of international stars, Scorpio dives onto Chris Benoit. Scorpio spent the better part of his formative years learning the aerial style from Japanese stars Kensuke Sasaki and Hiroshi Hase.



February 1996: Many fans wondered if Scorpio would be tough enough to thrive in ECW. Here he shows he is by wiping out three of the toughest wrestlers in ECW history—Shane Douglas, Pit Bull II, and Chris Jericho.



June 1998: Not many wrestlers in the sport's history have shown a more beautiful dropkick than Scorpio. His victim here is Jose Estrada Jr. Scorpio came to the WWF as Flash Funk but has since gone back to using his original name.



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Big Two Showdown!

VS.

WF WCW

THE TOP 10 FACEOFF!

THE BIG TWO wrestling companies collide once again as THE WRESTLER presents its third annual "Top 10 Faceoff." For those of you new to this tradition, we pit the WWF's top 10 wrestlers against WCW's top 10 wrestlers: No. 1 vs. No. 1, No. 2 vs. No. 2, and so on. We found that this system set up matches that were every bit as intriguing as the ones we could have set up had we intentionally placed one competitor against another. (The matches were determined by the wrestlers' titles and rankings as of July 21, 1998.)

Of course, a battle between the federations' top men is something we always want to see. This time around, we have newcomers to the top spots: WWF World champion Steve Austin and WCW World champion Bill Goldberg. Intercontinental champion Rocky Maivia faces now-former United States champion Bret Hart. Maivia wrestled Hart earlier in his career, but we think "The Rock" would give the "Hitman" a better run for his money these days.

The other matches run ripples through the imagination: Ken Shamrock vs. Dallas Page, The Undertaker vs. The Giant, Mankind vs. Dean Malenko, and Kane vs. Lex Luger, just to name a few.

Five members of THE WRESTLER's editorial staff served as the panelists. They examined each competitor's strengths, weaknesses, and potential game plans. For fun, we also included "quotes" we could imagine coming from each participant's mouth. Yes, we tried to make some of them just as obnoxious in the "Faceoff" as they are in real life.

It is interesting to note a comment from last year's introduction: "Never count out Vince McMahon." This year's "Faceoff" is proof the WWF has rebounded splendidly. The best evidence of this was the heated disputes among our panelists when selecting winners. There remains a great deal of parity between WCW and the WWF. No one seemed overmatched in any bout. There were no unanimous decisions. In fact, there wasn't a single 4-1 consensus. Only three out of five panelists could agree on the winner of any match.

We'll tell you the results at the very beginning: WCW won the "Faceoff" again this year, by a score of 6-4. You might be surprised at which matches WCW won ... and which ones they lost.

If some results make certain powers-that-be unhappy, then so be it. Maybe they'll give us a *real* faceoff someday!

STEVE AUSTIN



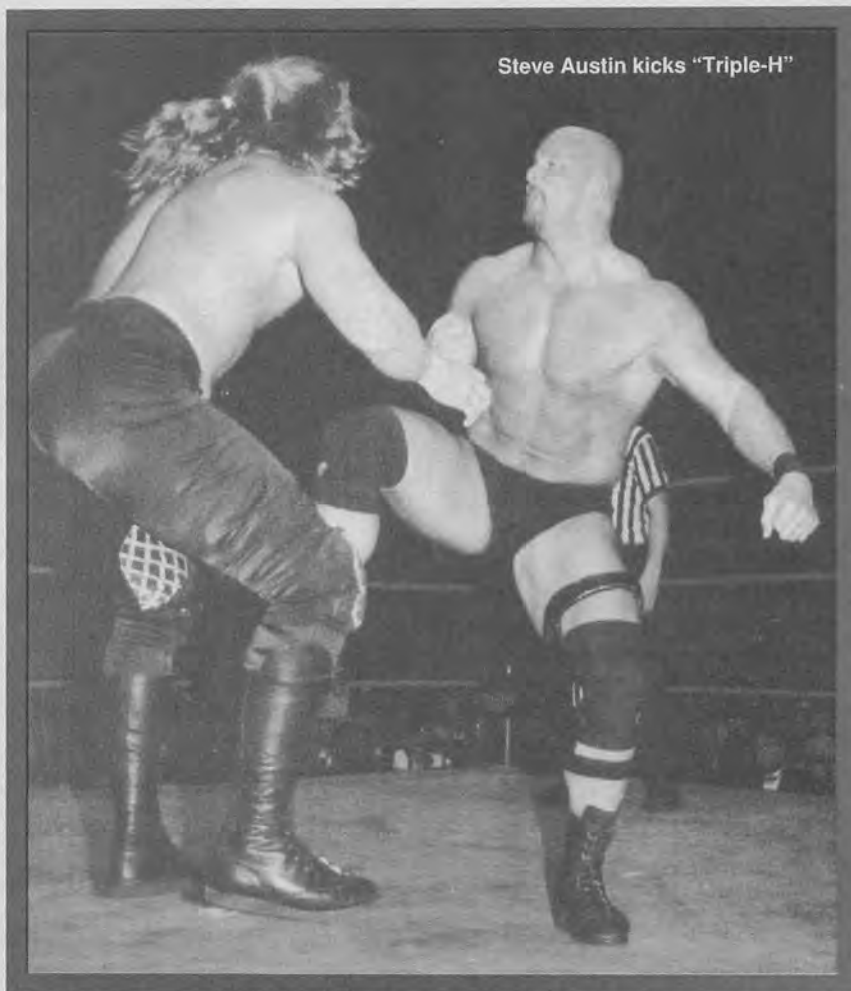
No. 1 vs. No. 1

One year ago, this battle of the best would have been inconceivable. Thanks to Owen Hart's piledriver at SummerSlam '97, Steve Austin was recovering from the effects of spinal shock syndrome. It wasn't certain whether he would ever compete again, let alone become WWF World champion—a status that seemed destined for only Bret Hart or Shawn Michaels. Bill Goldberg, on the other hand, wasn't even a mid-carder in WCW! On September 22, Goldberg made his *Nitro* debut. On July 6 of this year, he made history.

NOBODY DOES IT BETTER

Steve Austin: The WWF World champion is fearless. Just as he battled back from his neck injury a year ago, he has fought the odds ever since winning the title. He survived his hellish match against Kane, "stunned" The Undertaker, and repeatedly told the owner of the WWF to "go to hell." He would probably tell a certain ex-Atlanta Falcon where he could go as well.

Bill Goldberg: Tremendous mental focus was Goldberg's primary strength before everyone started taking notice of his undefeated streak. From then on, intimidation was his number-one weapon. Beating your head against locker doors also helps you earn that reputation. And just one look at Goldberg's phenomenal physical condition is enough to curb anyone's delusions of grandeur.



Steve Austin kicks "Triple-H"

ACHILLES HEELS

Steve Austin: His brawling style, as fast and furious as it is, might not serve him well against a larger foe with a cool head. Austin's opponents lose because they become overwhelmed. A tough guy who isn't intimidated easily might give "Stone-Cold" quite a surprise. From a physical standpoint, Austin's neck is always a question mark.

Bill Goldberg: The challenge

for Goldberg's adversaries is to actually find a weakness. Right now, Goldberg's only obvious deficiency is his relative inexperience. If an opponent ever pushes Goldberg past the 10-minute mark, it would be a good idea to go after his hamstrings or abdominal muscles. Goldberg has torn both.

GAME PLAN

Steve Austin: He would be

S. BILL GOLDBERG

WCW

Unbeaten WCW champ Bill Goldberg slams Jerry Flynn



foolhardy to go for a quick victory, especially via "stunner" in the first few minutes. Since Austin had so much success with that move, most people assume that it always results in a quick and sudden pinfall. That isn't the case. He might be tough enough to slug it out with Goldberg for 15 minutes, then go for his finisher. The trick to this, however, would be to keep Goldberg moving for the match's duration by frequently whipping him into the ropes and keeping him on his feet.

knee would be cunningly effective.

IF IT HAPPENED, THEY WOULD SAY IT

Steve Austin: "I've heard all the damn crap about how great you are and how you're the baddest man in WCW. Hell, I was the toughest S.O.B. in WCW when I belonged to that outfit, and you're going have to do a lot more than blow smoke out of your nostrils to prove a damn thing to me. You might have black boots, black trunks, a bald head, and a little

Bill Goldberg: Could Goldberg survive a "stunner" in the opening minutes of a match with Austin? The WCW World champion would prove himself very clever if he lured Austin into using the move, only to block or absorb the blow. Sound like a suicidal strategy? It would be for anyone else—but not Goldberg. He would be able to dictate the rest of the match and Austin might be rattled enough to stay off-balance. Goldberg would also want to attempt to keep Austin grounded. Aiming a "spear" at Austin's bad left

hair on your chin, but you ain't no Steve Austin, son."

Bill Goldberg: "I've been compared to Steve Austin so many times that I'm tired of hearing about it. At one time, I was flattered by the comparison. Now I've outgrown it. I've listened to your big-mouth guff long enough, Austin. You can leave the bad attitude at home. If not, I'll just beat it out of you."

OUR PICKS

Stu Saks (Publisher): Bill Goldberg

Dave Lenker (Editor-in-Chief): Steve Austin

Brandi Mankiewicz (Managing Editor): Steve Austin

Frank Krewda (Associate Editor): Bill Goldberg

Harry Burkett (Senior Writer): Steve Austin

BOTTOM LINE

Goldberg would have to wrestle a very smart match in order to beat Austin. Working on specific parts of the body, resisting the notion of trying the "jackhammer" too soon, and not allowing Austin to dictate the pace would be necessary ingredients. At this stage of his career, that might be asking too much. Austin, however, knows how to control the action and usually picks an appropriate time to execute the "stunner." Goldberg might not know how to deal with someone who isn't intimidated. The WWF World champion would defeat the WCW World champion in this one.

ROCKY MAIVIA V

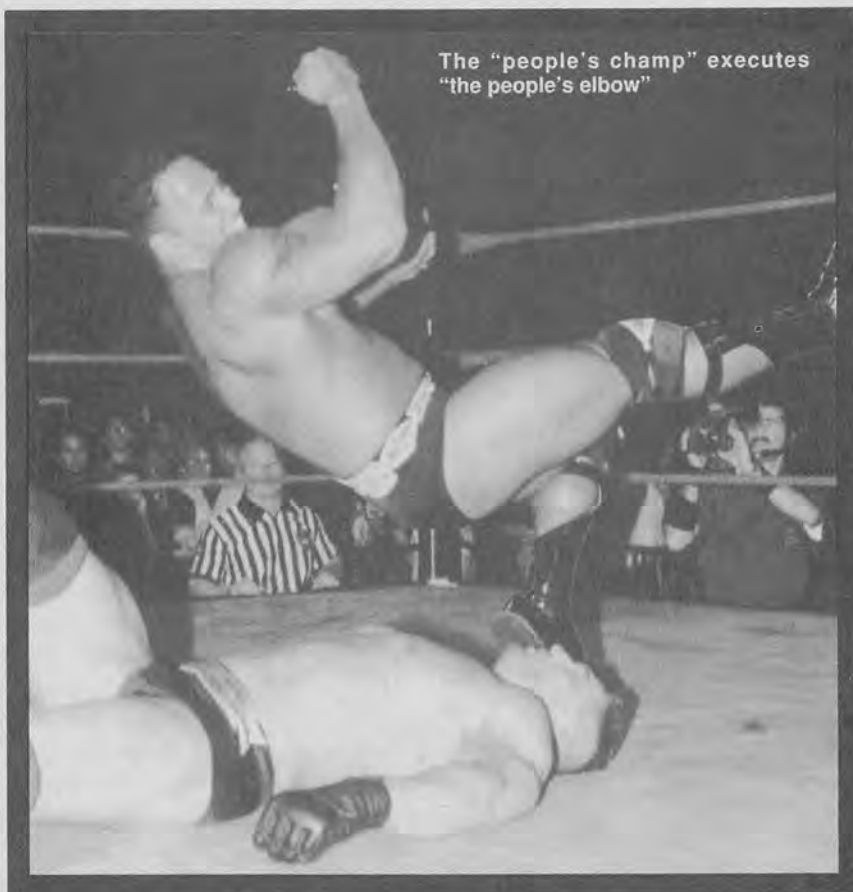
No. 2 vs. No. 2

Rocky Maivia will never forget the needless crime that was committed against him last year. He had finally returned to the ring following a serious knee injury, but, unfortunately for the future "Rock," there was a man at the arena who wanted to prove a point that same night. Bret Hart, trying to convince everyone he had become "wickedly bad," decided to ruthlessly attack Maivia's tender knee. If a match were held today, the "Hitman" would suffer the wrath of a much-improved wrestler.

NOBODY DOES IT BETTER

Rocky Maivia: "The Rock" can change the momentum of a match in an instant. A well-placed elbow, a knee to the midsection, or a stiff uppercut will jar the most confident of foes. Two factors give Maivia this advantage. First, his well-proportioned physique gives him fantastic stamina and above-average strength. Second, Maivia has a clear presence of mind at all times, whether he's being vaulted across the ring or lying flat on his back.

Bret Hart: Before Hart starts any match, he has already targeted his opponent's vulnerable body part. Not since the heyday of Ole Anderson has a wrestler been so proficient at ripping elbows, separating shoulders, or tearing knee ligaments. To Hart, it's all part of the game. He doesn't believe in a high-impact, knock-'em-down, hope-to-catch-'em-by-surprise style. His methods are deliberate



with an ultimate purpose.

ACHILLES HEELS

Rocky Maivia: The WWF Intercontinental champion has defended against many challengers, but few of them have used a mat-based submission style. And everyone knows how close Ken Shamrock has come to shattering Maivia's ankle and capturing the I-C title. Maivia is at his best when there is lots of motion in the ring, giving him a chance to think on his feet and pick his spots. When he's forced to stay in

one area on the canvas, he can't do much.

Bret Hart: The U.S. champion has been quoted as saying his knees are "turning into powder." In fact, Hart has delayed surgery on his knees for several years now. Leglocks of any kind keep Hart at a disadvantage. If you force his knees to bend the wrong way or clip him from behind, you can leave the "Hitman" writhing in agony.

GAME PLAN

Rocky Maivia: "The Rock"

S.

BRET HART

WCW



Bret Hart loves that "sharpshooter"

would need to maintain his height and weight advantage at all times. That would mean staying on his feet and keeping Hart near a corner. That way, the 6'4" Maivia could use his uppercuts and forearm blows more effectively. He could use his mass to hit Hart with body-to-body contact. Shoulderblocks, cross-body blocks, and, yes, "the people's elbow" would keep Hart at bay. Advice from fellow Nation member Owen Hart would be very useful, unless "The Black Hart"

still thinks his brother is wonderful.

Bret Hart: The "Hitman" should stick with the plan that has proven so successful for him. He should pick a body part, probably Maivia's knee. Once this strategy becomes apparent and Maivia tries to shield the knee from punishment, Hart could surprise him by using a few Russian leg-sweeps and attempting small-package pinfalls. Since he would be concentrating on the knee, the "sharpshooter" would be his ultimate weapon.

by choice. Stu and Helen even gave me your bedroom."

Bret Hart: "I want to tell you something, Maivia, in case you didn't hear it. I *am* the best there is, the best there was, and the best there ever will be. You call yourself 'The Rock'? You seem more like a pebble to me. However, I do want to say this: I'm appreciative of the way you've been watching Owen's back while I've been gone. You must not be a total degenerate if Owen likes to hang around you. But once we get in the ring, you're my number-one enemy."

OUR PICKS

Stu Saks (Publisher): Bret Hart

Dave Lenker (Editor-in-Chief): Rocky Maivia

Brandi Mankiewicz (Managing Editor): Rocky Maivia

Frank Krewda (Associate Editor): Bret Hart

Harry Burkett (Senior Writer): Bret Hart

BOTTOM LINE

It would be a classic contest of youth, size, and speed vs. experience, technical knowledge, and devious cunning. Maivia would keep Hart bouncing around the ring and, when placed at a disadvantage, would quickly bounce back. Hart, though, would have the patience to punish a specific body part, take a few shots from Maivia, then return to the area of attack. That would be the deciding factor.

IF IT HAPPENED, THEY WOULD SAY IT

Rocky Maivia: "I know what you're gonna say, Bret, before you even say it. Yeah, you think you're 'the best there is, the best there was, and the best there ever will be.' I've got news for you: 'The Rock' is the people's champion. So you can take that piece of tin you call a belt and throw it in the trash can. And, remember, you're Owen's brother only by blood. I'm Owen's brother

OWEN HART



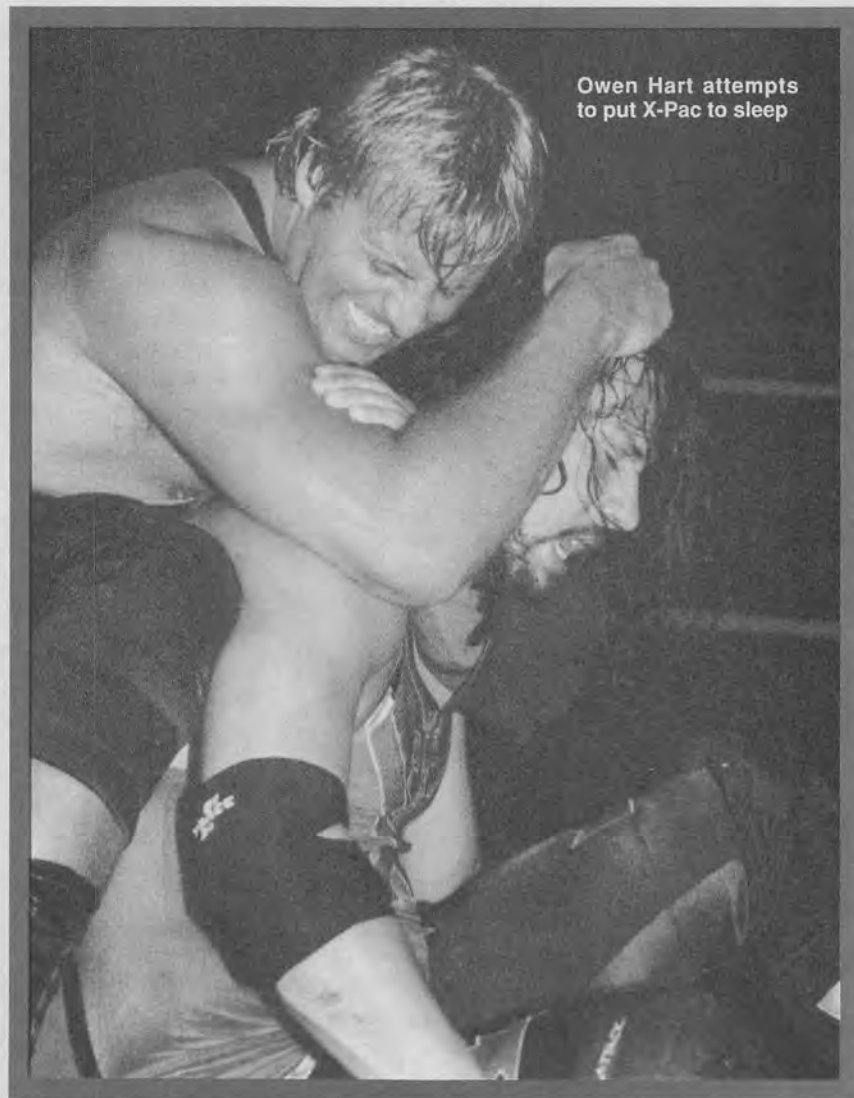
No. 3 vs. No. 3

If Owen Hart had been allowed to break his WWF contract and go to WCW with his brother Bret, this match might have been a reality today. Although these men have never had contact with each other in the ring, they have a great deal in common. Hart and Sting were riding unprecedented waves of popularity about 10 months ago, only to hit slumps when they failed to live up to their fans' expectations. Hart couldn't cut it as a "sole survivor," and Sting didn't save WCW from the NWO. Instead, both stars took refuge in wrestling gangs.

NOBODY DOES IT BETTER

Owen Hart: Steve Austin may be "the toughest S.O.B. in the WWF," but Owen Hart is no slouch. He has suffered through several physical ailments during the past year—including head injuries inflicted by Ahmed Johnson and X-Pac—and bounced back with little fanfare. Owen is a scientific wrestler like Bret, but he complements his mat expertise with aerial skills. When that's unsuccessful, he resorts to brawling. If plan A doesn't work, Owen has plans B and C to fall back upon.

Sting: He is one of the most durable wrestlers of all-time. Countless wrestlers have been able to put Sting on the defensive, yet few have been able to finish the job. Sting's surges of adrenalin late in a match often take weary opponents completely off-guard. And Sting doesn't come



Owen Hart attempts to put X-Pac to sleep

back with a few punches or kicks. He's capable of tossing an opponent into a corner, gathering a head of steam, and quickly launching into a "Stinger splash" at the 15- or 20-minute mark.

ACHILLES HEELS

Owen Hart: Multiple concus-

sions have proven that Hart is highly susceptible to head injuries. Savate kicks, DDTs, and even headbutts can leave Owen dazed and confused. He isn't much of a power wrestler, either. Hart usually loses tests of strength and suffers the brunt of mid-ring collisions. He is also too distracted by

S.

STING

WCW

Sting kicks The Giant



individuals outside the ring, a fact that has been amply demonstrated by DeGeneration X.

Sting: Sometimes Sting's abundance of energy works against him. In fact, Sting's timing hasn't been the same since his 15-month self-imposed exile. For example, he often executes the "Stinger splash" with too much velocity, coming close to soaring over his opponent's head! This was apparent when Hollywood Hogan pushed Sting to the limit at Starrcade '97 and during subsequent rematches. Isn't it tough to miss someone who stands 6'8"?

GAME PLAN

Owen Hart: "The Black Hart"

should enter the match expecting to be dominated in the opening minutes. The best Hart could do would be to brace himself, "go with the flow," then regroup once Sting expended some energy. Hart has already proven himself to be a master of this technique. At SummerSlam '97, for example, Steve Austin ran into the ring and dominated Hart for several minutes. Hart weathered the storm, mounted a brilliant offense of his own, and almost ended

Austin's career. He should use the same approach against Sting.

Sting: To defeat Owen, Sting would have to stray from his current style. First, Hart should be kept away from the ropes and confined to one part of the ring. If Sting couldn't do this, he would give Hart too much room to deliver spinning kicks and flying bodypresses. This is foreign to Sting's "hit-and-run" method, but it would be essential for him to claim victory. Otherwise, Owen might be too quick for him.

IF IT HAPPENED, THEY WOULD SAY IT

Owen Hart: "So you're the wimp called Sting. I can't say I'm very impressed. Well, you can

paint your face red, groove to your hip-hop, and howl like a wolf all you want. You're just like all the other degenerates running roughshod over this sport. You're lucky The Nation isn't in WCW. All of us would kick your butt!"

Sting: "You know, Harts aren't too popular with me these days. I don't think you're too much different from your conniving, backstabbing, opportunistic brother Bret. I'm going expose you as the fraud you are. All you Harts should've stayed in the Canadian freezer, pal. You guys are just too uptight, man. Maybe it's up to the 'Stinger' to loosen you up."

OUR PICKS

Stu Saks (Publisher): Owen Hart

Dave Lenker (Editor-in-Chief): Sting

Brandi Mankiewicz (Managing Editor): Owen Hart

Frank Krewda (Associate Editor): Sting

Harry Burkett (Senior Writer): Sting

BOTTOM LINE

Few people mention Sting and Owen Hart in the same breath when it comes to wrestling style, but they are amazingly similar. The primary difference is that Sting pushes the limits further than Hart. Sting doesn't hesitate to soar through the air with a "Stinger splash" or to sail out to the arena floor to tackle an opponent. Hart plays it safe, opting for a more methodical approach. Sting's willingness to take risks would give him the win.

KEN SHAMROCK V

No. 4 vs. No. 4

Would we have matched two more intense athletes? Probably not. Ken Shamrock, the former UFC great, has snapped plenty of ankles since arriving in the WWF and has even "snapped" a few times himself. "Diamond" Dallas Page, on the other hand, prefers the "bang" of his "Diamond cutter" to a snap, but the result is the same. Shamrock and Page are two of the most feared competitors in wrestling today. Fortunately, they are sportsmen most of the time. This bout would be the wildest of the faceoff.

NOBODY DOES IT BETTER

Ken Shamrock: "The World's Most Dangerous Man," when he has a cool head, executes each move with deliberate crispness. Sometimes wrestlers, especially veterans, like to say they could wrestle in their sleep. In other words, hoisting an opponent for a suplex, delivering a clothesline, or setting up someone for a leglock becomes second nature. Shamrock thinks that is bunk. For his belly-to-belly suplex, Shamrock grabs his opponent around the waist and jerks the man in a very precise motion—as if he's using it for the first time.

Dallas Page: The former U.S. champ exudes enthusiasm, which is transferred to the fans, who, in turn, give it back to Page in spades. Some competitors complain that pleasing fans is too much of a burden. Page sees fan adulation as a benefit. His "Diamond" hand signal, his strolls through the arena crowd, and his "jacked up" persona are all designed to get a rise from his sup-

porters. This adrenalin boost has propelled Page to heights he never thought possible.

ACHILLES HEELS

Ken Shamrock: Temper, temper, temper. Shamrock had actually defeated Rocky Maivia for the WWF Intercontinental title at WrestleMania XIV. "The Rock" had submitted, but Shamrock refused to release his anklelock, and the decision was reversed. Shamrock's abuse of referees and officials is also inexcusable. These actions don't prove his manhood. They prove he can be childish. Temper tantrums cost people key matches.

Dallas Page: Injuries, injuries, injuries. A pad has braced Page's kidneys and ribs for several months now. Hollywood Hogan and Dennis Rodman battered him with steel chairs. He was brutally attacked by the NWO just before a U.S. title match with Bret Hart. Page's gallantry has been awe-inspiring, but it has made him a target of jealous rivals. It seems like the only one getting banged up lately is DDP.

GAME PLAN

Ken Shamrock: There's no doubt Shamrock would enter this bout with a great deal of respect for Page. But once the bell rings,

Shamrock power-slams Rocky



Shamrock can turn into an absolute animal. He would attack Page's kidneys unmercifully. Instead of punching and kicking Page's kidneys, ribs, and abdomen like so many opponents do, Shamrock would use bearhugs and abdominal stretches to inflict punishment throughout the match.

Dallas Page: Since Shamrock is acknowledged as a scientific master, the street-wise Page would want to brawl it out with him.

S.

DALLAS PAGE

WCW

"Diamond" Dallas Page in control of Chris Benoit



His height and reach advantages would help him with punches, forearm smashes, and chops to the chest. Shamrock, also a tough brawler, would battle back. It wouldn't be pretty. Page would count on his size advantage and the "Diamond cutter" to make Shamrock the "World's Second-Most Dangerous Man."

IF IT HAPPENED, THEY WOULD SAY IT

Ken Shamrock: "I think you're a fantastic athlete and, more than that, you've got the heart of a lion. I admire those qualities in anyone, regardless of their vocation in life. If you were a mechanic, you'd be in that garage 14 hours a day. If you were a carpenter, you'd have a

house up in a week. Unfortunately for me, you're a wrestler. Page, I know you can go the distance ... but I can go beyond."

Dallas Page: "You've got to be one tough dude to survive the UFC, man. I'll give you that. But I've survived every challenge placed before me since I became a wrestler. The dirtiest of the dirty haven't been able to take that away from me—not Hogan, Rodman, Raven, none of 'em. I'm not going down in flames on account of you, Shamrock. I'm jacked to the moon! And you're gonna get *banged!*"

OUR PICKS

Stu Saks (Publisher): Dallas Page

Dave Lenker (Editor-in-Chief): Ken Shamrock

Brandi Mankiewicz (Managing Editor): Dallas Page

Frank Krewda (Associate Editor): Dallas Page

Harry Burkett (Senior Writer): Ken Shamrock

BOTTOM LINE

Despite Shamrock's scientific skills and submission style, this contest would quickly degenerate into a slugfest—but would likely remain in the ring. Chairs, ringposts, and security railings wouldn't come into play. Both would be bloody and battered, though. Shamrock's temper would eventually cause him to make costly mistakes. Page, accustomed to dealing with adversity, would find an opening and execute the "Diamond cutter." If the match went past the 10-minute mark, there's no way Shamrock could survive.

HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY



No. 5 vs. No. 5

At a glance, Hunter Hearst Helmsley and Chris Jericho look like they could be brothers. Their blond hair, muscular builds, and smug expressions are enough to give someone pause. And both act like punks. Helmsley, like the arrogant older brother, tries to impress the girls with his "coolness" and shocks his friends with crudeness. Jericho, like the sniveling younger brother, used to cry for the cruiserweight belt like a baby would cry for a bottle. In this matchup, it's hard to determine who would be man enough to come out on top.

NOBODY DOES IT BETTER

Hunter Hearst Helmsley: It is surprising that Helmsley doesn't rely on his strength more often. His ring style isn't unusual and, quite frankly, he seems like any other wrestler. Why does he win? Ask any of his opponents. Helmsley uses his strength to make routine holds such as chinlocks and armlocks excruciatingly painful. The ringside fan, unable to perceive the punishment Helmsley's opponent is receiving, often overlooks this fact.

Chris Jericho: The ability to perform "mid-air switches" is the reigning WCW TV champion's greatest ring attribute. He's an expert on the aerodynamics of his own body. Whether Jericho is leaping from the top turnbuckle, rebounding off the ropes, or jumping off the apron, he knows that a subtle twist of his body—or a slight variation in speed—

can allow him to perform another move entirely. A flying headscissors can become a huracanrana in an instant. Jericho's lightning-fast mind complements his speed.

ACHILLES HEELS

Hunter Hearst Helmsley:

At 279 pounds, Helmsley doesn't have great speed. His agility and sense of balance help him compensate for this shortcoming, but it's still a factor against faster rivals. He doesn't defend himself well against furious attacks and usually bails out of the ring to save himself from further harm.

Chris Jericho: Sometimes Jericho is too smart for his own good. He unnecessarily chooses complex moves over simple ones. If trapped on the top turnbuckle, for example, he will try to maneuver his opponent into position for a superplex rather than kicking him down to the canvas. He often attempts "tornado" DDTs when bulldogs would suffice.

"Triple-H's" size could be a problem



GAME PLAN

Hunter Hearst Helmsley: "Triple-H" would need to bring Jericho down for a crash landing. Since Helmsley specializes in high-impact moves that ground his opponents, this would be a relatively easy task for him. He's very proficient at catching opponents coming off the ropes and flooring them with DDTs, powerslams, or—if they are fatigued—"pedigrees." Helmsley's strategy would be to wait for Jericho's first mis-

S. CHRIS JERICHO

WCW

Chris Jericho's "Lion Tamer"



take and use a finisher that would quickly end the match.

Chris Jericho: "Lion Heart" should stay mobile. Bounce off the ropes, do leapfrogs, use monkey flips and anything else that might keep Helmsley befuddled. He'd need to exhaust Helmsley by being a moving target. This could turn out to be a long match, but—at 225 pounds—his stamina should allow him to outlast Helmsley. And he better not attempt to use the "Lion Tamer" on "Triple-H." His legs are far too powerful.

IF IT HAPPENED, THEY WOULD SAY IT

Hunter Hearst Helmsley: "Hey, Jericho, do you want to know what I used to do to guys like you in school? I'd wait until all the girls came out during gym class, then I'd sneak up behind the dumbest-looking geek, grab the sides of his shorts, and yank 'em all the way down to his ankles! I bet you'd cry like a baby if I did that to you, Jericho. Then you would run to the principal's office and try to get me

kicked out of school."

Chris Jericho: "It's not fair that I've got to wrestle you, Helmsley! I'm a cruiserweight. You're a heavyweight. What kind of match is this? I've got news for all you fools at THE WRESTLER. If you look in the June 1967 issue of your magazine, it plainly states that cruiserweights are exempt from wrestling heavyweights in these kinds of faceoffs. It's a conspiracy!"

OUR PICKS

Stu Saks (Publisher): Chris Jericho

Dave Lenker (Editor-in-Chief): Hunter Hearst Helmsley

Brandi Mankiewicz (Managing Editor): Chris Jericho

Frank Krewda (Associate Editor): Chris Jericho

Harry Burkett (Senior Writer): Hunter Hearst Helmsley

BOTTOM LINE

This may be the most controversial result of 1998's faceoff. Three out of five panelists decided that Jericho's speed and skill would outshine Helmsley's power and cunning. In a match against a cruiserweight, Helmsley's bulk would probably hinder rather than help him. If he relied more on power moves—like press-slams and over-the-knee backbreakers—his strength alone might be enough to overwhelm the WCW TV champ. As it stands, Jericho is too adept at anticipating his opponents' moves and coming up with immediate counters.

THE UNDERTAKER



No. 6 vs. No. 6

The Undertaker and The Giant are the most awesome presences in their respective federations. Unlike many physical wonders of the past, both men have had great championship success. The Undertaker is a two-time WWF World champion. The Giant captured the WCW World title in his rookie year (1996). Neither man backs down from challenges. If federation politics were different, these athletes would jump at the chance to meet in a clash of the titans.

NOBODY DOES IT BETTER

The Undertaker: The man from the dark side has a unique ability to combine his size advantage with his aerial prowess. He can vault over the top rope and down to the arena floor in a moment's notice. He treads the top rope like Spiderman. Undertaker has mastered the art of using his strength in a defensive manner. Full press-slams and over-the-shoulder backbreakers are in his repertoire, yet he can also brace his muscles to absorb body blows or protect himself during falls to the canvas.

The Giant: He gains an advantage from the outset by making his opponents feel very small. Yes, his opponents are usually much smaller in comparison, but The Giant has a way of obliterating any remnants of confidence they have in the first place. Maybe it's his swagger, his sneer, his condescending eye, or the

way he smokes during some of his matches. Intimidation starts his matches; choke-slams usually end them.

ACHILLES HEELS

The Undertaker: His great resiliency is now legendary. Maybe too much so. 'Taker takes too much punishment during many of his matches, probably because he knows it's possible to rally later on in the match. That works against smaller foes like Shawn Michaels, and larger foes such as Vader and Barry Windham, but it's not going to work against a huge individual in reasonable shape.

The Giant: A recent weight gain has slowed down The Giant considerably. He seems almost proud of the fact that he has gained 80 pounds over the past two years. That's too bad. At 430 pounds, he was large enough to mow down any foe. The increase in mass hampers his mobility

Watch out for 'Taker's "tombstone"



and adds nothing to his power. His craving for nicotine doesn't help, either.

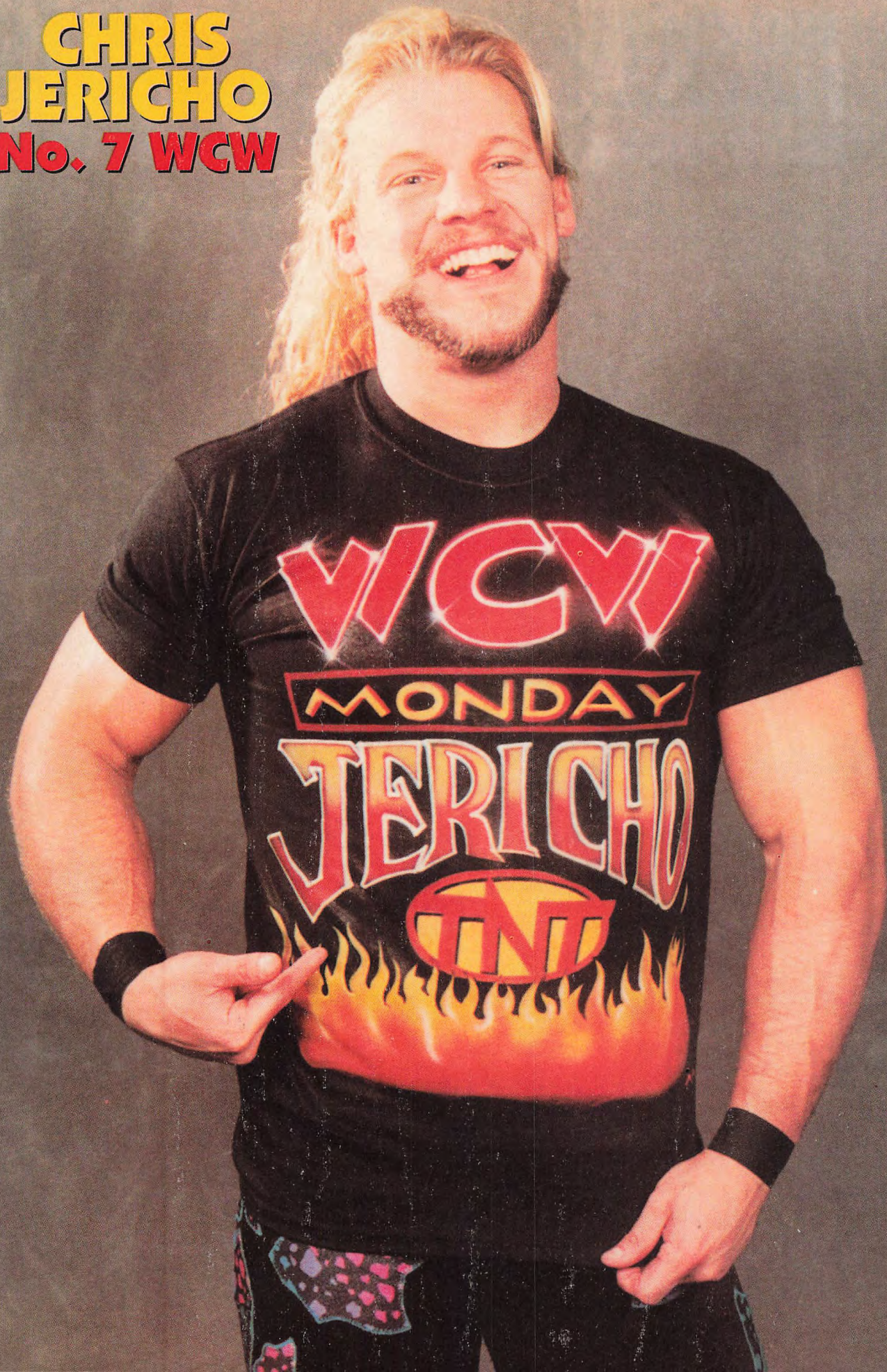
GAME PLAN

The Undertaker: 'Taker would need to begin quickly with underhand jabs and forearms. Then he could trap The Giant in the corner and punish him with

**ROCKY
MAIVIA**
No. 2 WWF



**CHRIS
JERICHO**
No. 7 WCW



THE UNDERTAKER

No. 4 WWF



**BRET
HART**
No. 2 WCW



S.

THE GIANT

WCW

The Giant choke-slams
Disco Inferno



kicks. If the action were to leave the corner, he could go to the air with flying lariats, bodypresses, and maybe even dropkicks. In the past, he has used aerial moves to shock his opponents. Against a larger foe, they are dependable offensive moves. The Undertaker should think like a cruiserweight.

The Giant: He would want to try

IF IT HAPPENED, THEY WOULD SAY IT

The Undertaker: "I have met demons and dragons, but I have never stood before a colossus such as you. You don't breathe fire, you don't bury people underground, and you've never harmed anyone's family. But you chill me to the bone. Is it your confidence? Is it your utter disregard for your oppo-

to hit The Undertaker with sledgehammer blows to the back, legdrops, and rear chinlocks. Keep him away from the ropes. Executing suplexes would be a good way for The Giant to use his mass against 'Taker without expending a lot of energy. If The Undertaker is sufficiently weakened, The Giant shouldn't be afraid to use the choke-slam. Then again, he could take a page from Kane's playbook and use a "tombstone" piledriver.

nents? I don't know. Maybe I'll find out once I've slayed you."

The Giant: "Oh, Undertaker, you give me the heebie-jeebies. I outgrew that Halloween costume when I was 10 years old. I don't need ghosts, goblins, or any 'creatures of the night' on my side. All I need is my choke-slam. And do you know what's going to happen when I get my hands around your cold throat? I'm going to choke-slam you right through the canvas!"

OUR PICKS

Stu Saks (Publisher): The Undertaker

Dave Lenker (Editor-in-Chief): The Undertaker

Brandi Mankiewicz (Managing Editor): The Giant

Frank Krewda (Associate Editor): The Undertaker

Harry Burkett (Senior Writer): The Giant

BOTTOM LINE

If this occurred in 1996, when The Giant was in peak physical condition and still hungry, the outcome might be different. Today, The Giant is lacking the ambition and drive that once propelled him to the top. His attempts to be "cool" with NWO Hollywood is an example of that. The Undertaker, however, is more focused than ever. His feud against Kane helped him put career matters in perspective. 'Taker's determination to regain the WWF World title again is inspiring.

MANKIND

V

No. 7 vs. No. 7

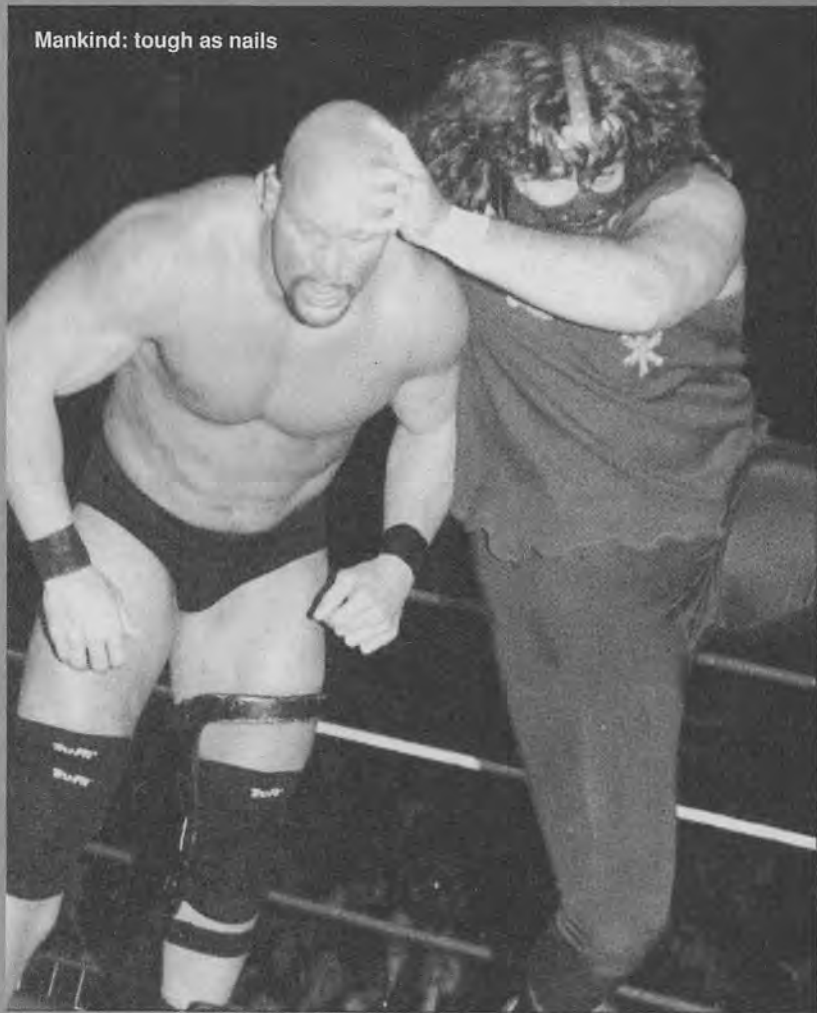
What would happen in a match between two wrestlers who are worlds apart? We're inferring that Dean Malenko represents planet Earth and Mankind is from someplace outside the galaxy! Are these two men even in the same sport? Malenko's repertoire consists of a spectrum of holds, from the armbar to the wristlock to the "Texas Cloverleaf." Mankind's arsenal consists of everything from flying elbows to thumbtacks. Which would win, science or violence?

NOBODY DOES IT BETTER

Mankind: Endurance is Mankind's secret to success. But after Mankind survived two falls from the top of a steel cage in his "Hell In A Cell" match against The Undertaker at King of the Ring, his toughness was a secret no longer. He has also survived several injuries to his right knee, being power-bombed twice on a concrete floor, having a portion of his ear torn off, and being thrown on a bed of tacks. It's all in a day's work for Mankind/Dude Love/Cactus Jack/Mick Foley.

Dean Malenko: He is a master of chain wrestling. Every move or hold Malenko uses automatically sets up another: standing headlock, go-behind switch, fireman's carry, hammerlock, and so on. Malenko thrives in matches against other scientific wrestlers because he capitalizes on their moves almost as much as he capitalizes on his own.

Mankind: tough as nails



ACHILLES HEELS

Mankind: His toughness, which is his greatest attribute, has led to many Achilles heels. Mankind can handle being smashed with a chair, having his head rammed into a ringpost, or being leveled by a popcorn machine. He actually has a more difficult time surviving traditional wrestling holds. A full-

nelson, if properly applied, could separate Mankind's shoulder faster than a toss into the security railing.

Dean Malenko: "The Man Of A Thousand Holds" is out of his element when matches degenerate into brawls. He can handle himself against fellow cruiserweights, but he doesn't have the height, reach, or power to slug it

S.

DEAN MALENKO

WCW

Malenko: scientific wizard



out with 300-pounders. Also, Malenko has had neck and back problems. Those will always be vulnerable spots for him.

GAME PLAN

Mankind: He would likely look to lure Malenko into fisticuffs at the start of the match. Make him angry. Stall for time. Do anything that would raise Malenko's ire. Mankind, who outweighs Malenko by 60 pounds and stands seven inches taller, should have no problem punching and stomping him down to the mat. Unfortunately

should concentrate on stationary holds that would wrench Mankind's joints and sockets. After tangling with Malenko, Mankind would probably feel as if he were being torn apart.

IF IT HAPPENED, THEY WOULD SAY IT

Mankind: "I don't want to hurt you, Dean. Honestly, I don't. You seem so serious. I feel like your eyes are penetrating me! Stop looking at me! Put an expression on your face, for goodness sake! I see that I will be forced to mangle you just to get you to stop

for Malenko, there's no fancy counter for the mandible claw. It's doubtful he would have enough strength to prevent Mankind's fingers from being jammed into his esophagus.

Dean Malenko: "The Ice-man" should do what he does best, which is to maintain his composure. Never be drawn outside the ring. If Mankind starts using rough-house tactics, depend on the referee to maintain control. He

looking at me! I'm not your puppet! Stop controlling me! Have a nice day!"

Dean Malenko: "You're a disgrace to the sport. Fire, thumbtacks, and barbed wire have no place in professional wrestling. You're not a wrestler. You specialize in barbarism. Well, Mankind, I'm a member of 20th century civilization, and you're not going to drag me down to your gutter level. Once you get to the ring, be ready to wrestle ... or don't come at all."

OUR PICKS

Stu Saks (Publisher): Dean Malenko

Dave Lenker (Editor-in-Chief): Mankind

Brandi Mankiewicz (Managing Editor): Mankind

Frank Krewda (Associate Editor): Dean Malenko

Harry Burkett (Senior Writer): Mankind

BOTTOM LINE

It was difficult for members of our staff to choose Mankind over Dean Malenko, the man who was chosen the best wrestler in the world in 1997's "PWI 500." It's also hard to concede that sadism can prevail over wrestling excellence. In the case of Mankind vs. Malenko, it probably would. This contest would degenerate into something less than wrestling, despite Malenko's best efforts. Win or lose, Mankind insists on playing the game his way.

KANE



No. 8 vs. No. 8



Both Kane and Lex Luger would face interesting challenges in this match. Kane has yet to face a chiseled physical specimen who possesses Luger's strength. And Luger hasn't faced anyone who is as obsessed with fire as Kane is. It would be Kane, the bizarre offspring of the WWF's "bad attitude," against Lex Luger, WCW's perennial poster boy, in this contest.

NOBODY DOES IT BETTER

Kane: Paul Bearer's boy is slow, lumbering, and very methodical. These would be definite weaknesses if Kane were not capable of dictating the pace of nearly all his matches. If someone is too agile, Kane will pull him down to the mat and deliver punishment in his own sweet time. Steve Austin and The Undertaker have both defeated Kane, but they were forced to wrestle his kind of match to do it.

Lex Luger: Few people stand over Luger, yet when battling larger foes, he always finds a way to bring them down to size. "The Total Package" has placed Hollywood Hogan, Kevin Nash, and even The Giant in his "torture rack." That submission hold has an instant effect on the back and spine, resulting in a prompt submission. No one, it seems, is too big to be "racked."

ACHILLES HEELS

Kane: When matched against experienced foes like WWF champ Steve Austin and The Undertaker, the first chink in his armor became apparent. Kane's reaction time is



very slow. It's difficult to determine whether this is a physical or mental challenge for Kane. If an opponent is ever lucky enough to gain the advantage, it seems hard for Kane to regroup long enough to end the flurry. A desperate punch or kick is needed to do the trick.

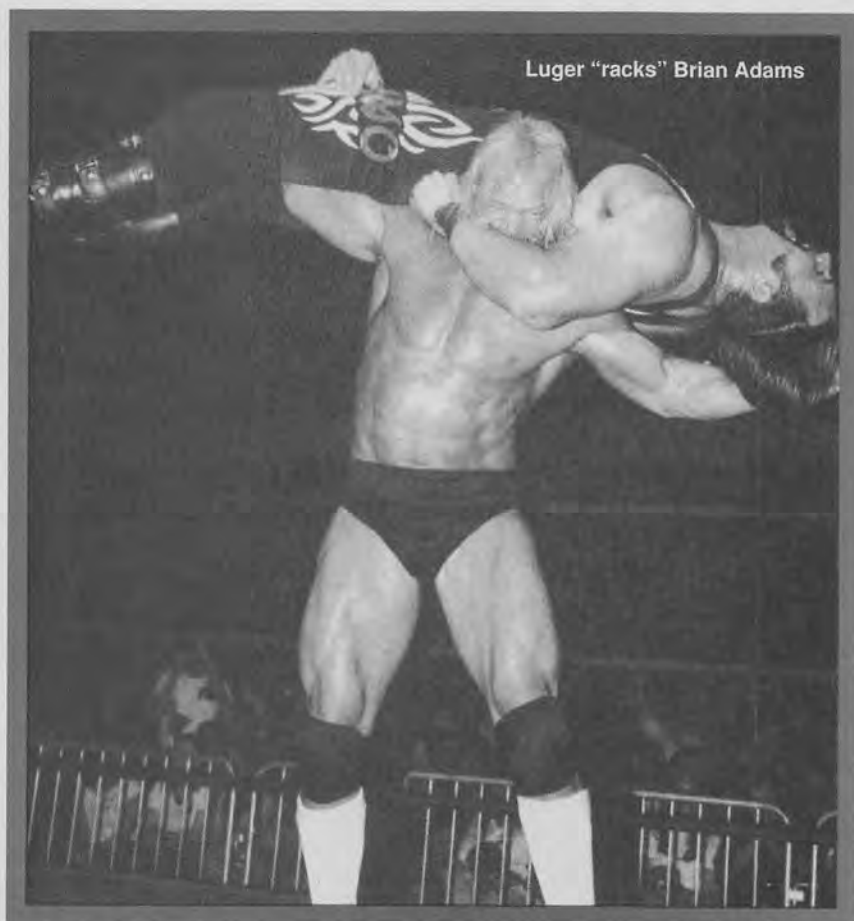
Lex Luger: The former WCW World champion doesn't stay on the

offensive for long. In most of Luger's matches, he starts strong, suffers a beating from his opponent, then rallies for a win. A larger, tougher opponent might not allow him enough time to mount a dramatic comeback. Luger knows how to dish out tremendous poundings, but he often gives his opponent too much breathing space.

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LEX LUGER

WCW



Luger "racks" Brian Adams

GAME PLAN

Kane: He would have to knock Luger off his feet early. Given Kane's height and weight advantage, that shouldn't be a problem. From that point on, he should keep Luger down on the canvas, never allowing him to use his upper-body strength from a standing position. Whenever Luger is on his feet, there's a chance he might surprise his opponent with a clothesline, powerslam, or "torture rack." Kane shouldn't let that happen.

Lex Luger: "The Total Package"

should never battle Kane toe-to-toe. And as powerful as Luger is, he shouldn't try to knock him down with tackles, shoulderblocks, or flying bodypresses. Attacks on Kane's torso wouldn't work. Luger should clip Kane's legs from behind, grab a knee, or even try a Russian legsweep. Once Kane is down, Luger would need to target a leg and take away his mobility.

IF IT HAPPENED, THEY WOULD SAY IT

Kane: (via electronic device) "Lex

Luger will feel my wrath. Who are you to dare challenge Kane? Who are you to think defeating Kane is possible? Do you like it when flames lick your body, Lex Luger? My father says you should be destroyed. I will follow his advice. You do not deserve mercy."

Lex Luger: "I've wrestled my share of so-called giants in this sport, but I've never faced anyone as demonic as you, Kane. I understand that you've been getting away with everything in the WWF. You and Mankind. What a pair you are! The more I think about you and what you represent, the sicker I get. This time, you're going to be the one who gets burned."

OUR PICKS

Stu Saks (Publisher): Lex Luger
Dave Lenker (Editor-in-Chief): Kane

Brandi Mankiewicz (Managing Editor): Kane

Frank Krewda (Associate Editor): Kane

Harry Burkett (Senior Writer): Lex Luger

BOTTOM LINE

Despite our sound advice, Luger would probably go forward with his tried-and-true methods. In the early going, he would rock Kane with punches, clotheslines, and shoulderblocks. Kane would not only resist that kind of offense, but would probably grab Luger by the throat and choke-slam him. A "tombstone" piledriver would allow Luger to rest in peace.

JEFF JARRETT



No. 9 vs. No. 9

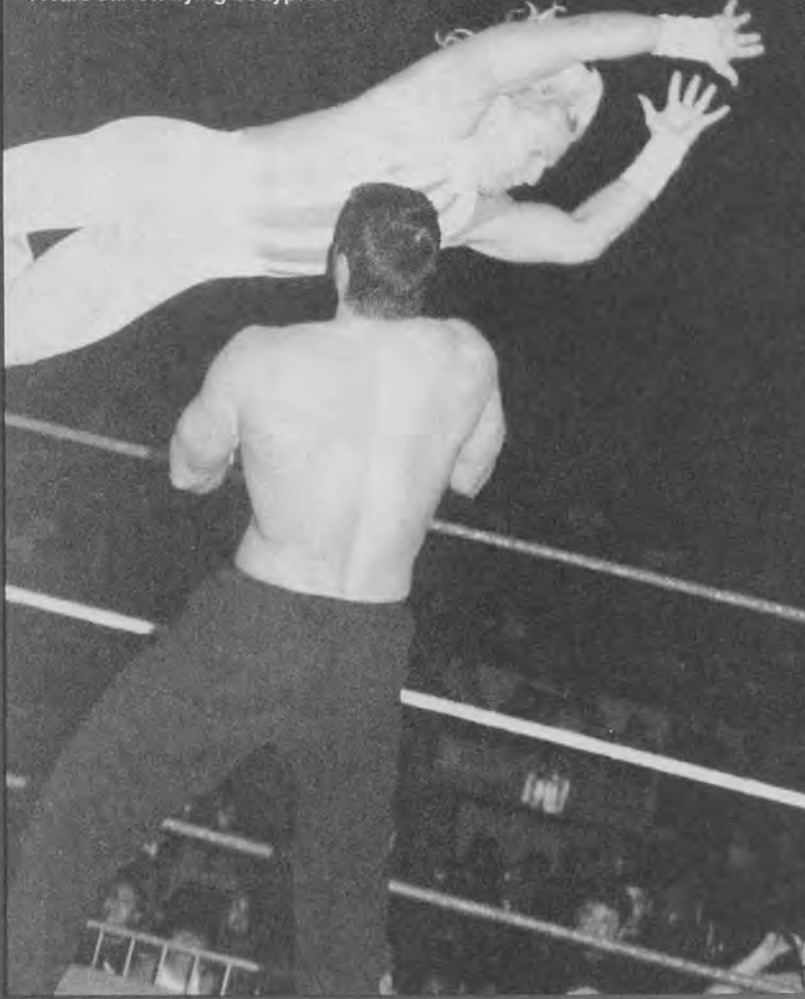
This might be the most evenly matched faceoff of the series. Jeff Jarrett, who was a dominant Intercontinental champion during a previous stay in the WWF, and who enjoyed a U.S. title reign in WCW, now finds himself in a slump. Yes, he won the NWA North American title last year, but matters inside Camp NWA—and Jarrett's career—soon turned sour. Booker T, on the other hand, can call 1998 his breakout year. He is now a five-time WCW TV champion, and he even fended off Bret Hart at Bash at the Beach. Booker T and Jeff Jarrett find themselves at the intersection of superstardom.

NOBODY DOES IT BETTER

Jeff Jarrett: In terms of style, Jarrett could in many ways be considered a younger, smaller version of Ric Flair. He believes in the old rules of showmanship and his responsibility to entertain an audience. Like Flair, Jarrett is wickedly effective when it comes to pinpointing a knee or ankle and just stomping the heck out of it. That always sets up the figure-four leglock, another trademark of both Jarrett and Flair.

Booker T: The former tag team specialist in Harlem Heat is most effective with high-impact moves that involve his powerful legs. The spinning kick, the scissor kick, and the missile dropkick are all staples in Booker's repertoire. His TV title reigns have given him the confidence necessary to be a major player—no matter what Stevie Ray says.

A rare Jarrett flying bodypress



ACHILLES HEELS

Jeff Jarrett: If there's a knock against Jarrett, it's that the 230-pound Tennessee native often tries to wrestle like a 250-pounder. Jarrett prefers a ground attack with occasional dropkicks and flying bodypresses. Not everyone can soar through the air like Taka Michinoku or Rey Misterio Jr., but

it's surprising that Jarrett doesn't take advantage of his compact frame more often. However, he does a good job of compensating for this weakness with extensive scientific expertise.

Booker T: His mat skills are questionable. He occasionally relies on the moves he and Stevie Ray executed in tag team unison during

S.

BOOKER T

WCW

Booker T knows how to use his height to his advantage



grounded with leglocks. It would be a slower-paced match, especially if Booker T were unable to use his high kicks. Naturally, the figure-four would be Jarrett's finisher of choice.

Booker T: He would attempt to keep Jarrett away from his bad knee, although he would still use it in his primary moves. But his spinning kicks, for example, would eventually take a toll on that knee. At that point, Booker would need to switch to a pure power attack, making full use of his

might give me some competition in a few years, but you're still just a steppingstone for 'the world's greatest wrestler and the world's greatest entertainer.'"

Booker T: "I had a few run-ins with Jarrett while he was in WCW. Yeah, he's good, but he's not quite good enough. Jarrett, you're just like Bret Hart. Both of you are second-generation wrestlers who think championships should be handed to you on silver platters. Neither of you have had to work as hard as me to get somewhere in this sport. Both of you suckas are runnin' on lazy legs."

OUR PICKS

Stu Saks (Publisher): Jeff Jarrett

Dave Lenker (Editor-in-Chief): Booker T

Brandi Mankiewicz (Managing Editor): Jeff Jarrett

Frank Krewda (Associate Editor): Booker T

Harry Burkett (Senior Writer): Booker T

BOTTOM LINE

Worlds would collide as Nashville met Harlem. There's a good chance "Double J" would try to slug it out for a while with Booker. That would be a huge mistake. Booker T is determined and hungry, and he has plenty of momentum. Jarrett prefers to wrestle in an even-paced match. Booker T, however, knows how to switch gears—usually around the seven-minute mark—then raise the roof on his opponents.

their Harlem Heat days. Clotheslines, elbowsmashes, and legdrops are sometimes the order of the day. Booker must realize that tag team moves, although performed by one man, don't always work in singles matches. He should learn more about submission wrestling.

GAME PLAN

Jeff Jarrett: This is an easy one. Jarrett would aim for the knee that has given Booker T so much trouble. Did everyone think Bret Hart was vicious at Bash at the Beach? Jarrett would be just as relentless. He would try to keep Booker

20-pound weight advantage. Bodyslams and powerslams would be enough to keep Jarrett on the defensive.

IF IT HAPPENED, THEY WOULD SAY IT

Jeff Jarrett: "There's nothin' that entertains the crowd like a big, stupid punk getting the daylight's kicked out of him. And that's exactly what I'm going to do to you, Booker T. Yeah, I know you're a good athlete, and you're finally hitting your stride. But you don't have the technical know-how and the experience I do. Ain't I great? You

MARC MERO

V

No. 10 vs. No. 10

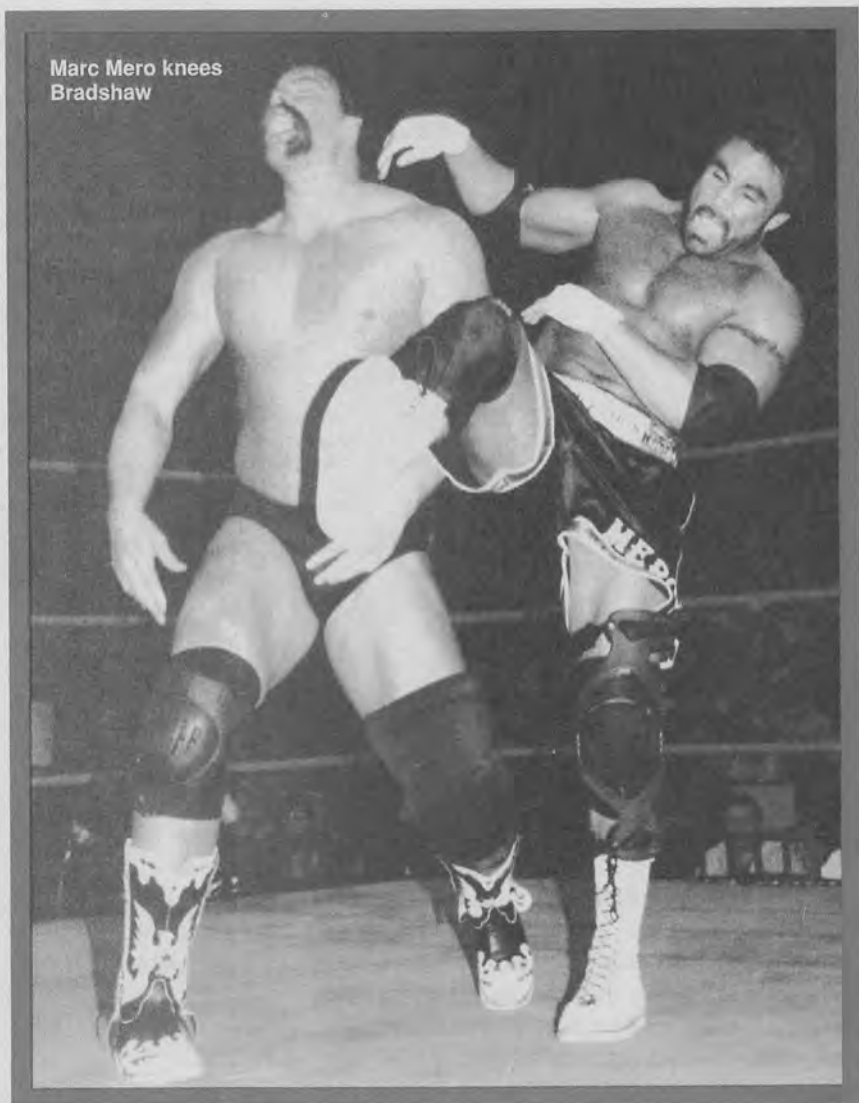
The dynamics of this match can be described in many ways: boxer vs. wrestler, cheap shot artist vs. sportsman, or, most aptly, a battle between two men in their prime. But there's yet another dynamic at work here. Mero and Benoit, both acknowledged as extremely talented athletes, have fallen short of expectations. Mero won the WCW TV title in only his third year as a pro but has slumped lately. Benoit was a standout in Calgary and Japan before becoming a cornerstone of The Four Horsemen in WCW. In the faceoff, at least, one of these men will receive the recognition he deserves.

NOBODY DOES IT BETTER

Marc Mero: "Marvelous" Marc knows how to take command of the ring. This ability probably stems from his boxing days. He knows how to position his opponents by cutting the squared circle in half or lunging his body in certain directions. Mero often tricks his opponents into assuming specific moves are coming, then does something completely different and catches them unprepared.

Chris Benoit: "The Canadian Crippler" is an accurate description of Benoit, but here's a better one: scientific mauler. Like Johnny Valentine, who once described himself as "scientifically rough," Benoit knows how to use traditional wrestling holds to cause more damage than any chair or foreign object. In this sense, he is also similar to Ken Shamrock.

Marc Mero knees
Bradshaw



ACHILLES HEELS

Marc Mero: His biggest weakness is a common ailment among pro wrestlers these days: a bum knee. In Mero's case, he suffered torn anterior cruciate, medial collateral, and meniscus ligaments in his left knee, which accounts for his new, more grounded style. He

might opt for a high-risk maneuver if his opponent is at a severe disadvantage, but that's rare. Considering how Mero once vaulted with the ease of a gymnast, it's quite a pity.

Chris Benoit: Sometimes he exhausts himself while beating on his opponent. Whenever he has

S.

CHRIS BENOIT

WCW



Chris Benoit's "Crippler crossface"

someone trapped in a corner, he enjoys repeatedly stomping the poor soul into oblivion—and he's more likely to push a referee back than stop. Benoit does tend to get carried away in the heat of battle—and his opponents are sometimes carried away on stretchers.

GAME PLAN

Marc Mero: We hate to give advice that's going to cause someone pain, but such is our advice to Marc Mero. Because of his limited mobility, Mero would need to concede the speed advantage to Benoit, whose training in Stu Hart's Dungeon and his experience in Japan would force Mero to avoid wrestling on the mat. The alternative? Mero does possess an advantage in punching power and brawling technique. He might have to take three shots from Benoit for the benefit of giving two. It would be gritty, but it might be his only chance.

Chris Benoit: Unfortunately, Benoit could live up to his nickname in this bout. His best bet would be to target Mero's knee and stomp it with reckless abandon. He should make sure the referee doesn't become distracted by events outside the ring, because Mero lands low blows at the first opportunity. Benoit would need to forget the "Crippler crossface" and borrow a hold from his mentor, Ric Flair, by using a figure-four leglock.

IF IT HAPPENED, THEY WOULD SAY IT

Marc Mero: "Little Chrissie Benoit. I guess you consider yourself quite 'the wolverine' these days. You know, I'm sick and tired of hearing how great Chris Benoit is. What major title have you held, Benoit? Now I hear you're trying to re-form The Four Horsemen again. Nice try, Chris. You're just trying to get the focus off your failures by resur-

recting a has-been group."

Chris Benoit: "When you were in WCW a few years ago, Marc, you were an inspiration to me. You had only been wrestling for about three years and already you were a major player. I just want to know what happened to you. Why do you hide behind women all the time? Jacquelyn and most other women involved in wrestling are nothing but trouble. Believe me, I know. If your knee is causing you problems, or you just can't hack it any more, maybe you should get out now."

OUR PICKS

Stu Saks (Publisher): Chris Benoit

Dave Lenker (Editor-in-Chief): Chris Benoit

Brandi Mankiewicz (Managing Editor): Marc Mero

Frank Krewda (Associate Editor): Chris Benoit

Harry Burkett (Senior Writer): Marc Mero

BOTTOM LINE

Much of this match would be a free-for-all brawl, with Mero maintaining a slight advantage. It would be Mero's boxing skills against Benoit's tenacity and stamina. This bout would probably turn to Benoit's favor in the later stages, when both men would tire of brawling. At that point, Benoit would rely on headlocks, chinlocks, and especially leglocks to keep Mero grounded. A figure-four would force Mero to submit. □

ECW MIDYEAR

ACTION

TALENT ROSTER

COMPETITIVENESS

PUBLIC IMAGE

PAY-PER-VIEWS

ARENA SHOWS

TV PRODUCTION

ANNOUNCERS

FAN RELATIONS

REPORT

PAUL HEYMAN AND company continue to concentrate their energies where it really counts—in the ring, which is why ECW's "hardcore" action and small-market values have attracted such a doggedly loyal fan base.

ECW was also able to expand into several new markets in the last half year, and the new fans have had a lot to cheer about. The TV title changed hands—twice—as did the tag team title. There was even a new "title" added to the mix, Taz' FTW championship (you figure it out).

Many of ECW's top stars have been slowed by injuries, but true to form, they've all toughed it out. Loyalty. Toughness. Excitement. It's what Extreme Championship Wrestling is all about. If the next six months are as "extreme" as the first six were, 1998 should be a banner year for ECW.

THE GRADES ARE IN ...

They get an "A": Rob Van Dam won the TV title and tag team title in highlight-reel fashion ... **Taz** overcame a questionable loss to **Bam Bam Bigelow** at Living Dangerously and a rash of injuries to stay in the title hunt.

They get a "B": **Sabu** is suicidal, homicidal, genocidal and he's also a tag team champ ... **Spike**



Van Dam has much to smile about

Dudley routinely defies the odds to beat his brothers ... Former tag team champs **Chris Candido** and **Lance Storm** feuded, but put the team ahead of their differences and looked pretty good to boot ... **Bam Bam Bigelow** held the TV belt for a while and remains the Triple Threat's enforcer ... **Jerry Lynn** was his steady, underrated self ... **Justin Credible** looked strong after his rebirth in ECW.



Chetti can go a lot higher

They get a "C": **Chris Chetti** hasn't lived up to the hype ... **Al Snow** challenged champion **Shane Douglas** at Wrestlepalooza, then faded fast ... **The Sandman** limped through the first half of 1998 ... Injuries plagued **Tommy Dreamer** as well ... **Buh Buh Ray**, **D-Von**, and "**Big**" **Dick Dudley** were impressive, but shouldn't be rewarded for beating up **Beulah McGillicutty** ... **New Jack** earns points for his crazy dives, but where would he be without his weapons? ... Where would **Axl Rotten** and **Mahoney** be without their chairs?

They get a "D": **The Blue Meanie** and **Super Nova** can only beat the **FBI**, but they don't do that often enough. And vice versa ... **John Kronus** hasn't spent

... .A

... .C

... .A

... .C-

... .B

... .B

... .D

... .B+

... .A+

enough time in the gym, but has somehow retained his aerial ability ... **Mike Lozansky**, **Danny Doring**, and **Ulf Hermann** lose on a regular basis.

They get an "F": Jack Victory adds nothing to the Dudley Boys ... Has anyone noticed that **Amish Roadkill** is gone?



We're not sure about Duncum Jr. just yet

They get an "incomplete": **Shane Douglas** looked like the champion he is—when injuries allowed him to wrestle ... Ditto, **Mikey Whipwreck** ... **Masato Tanaka**, **Mike Awesome**, and **Bobby Duncum Jr.** all looked impressive, but haven't been around long enough to earn a grade ... And where have you gone, **Doug Furnas**?

I DON'T WANT HER, YOU CAN HAVE HER, SHE'S TOO EXTREME FOR ME

Since joining ECW as Justin Credible's valet, former professional bodybuilder **Nicole Bass** has heard some pretty strange remarks from the fans about her muscular physique. Even announcer **Joey Styles** chimed in after seeing Bass in a revealing two-piece outfit, "That'll make Darwin scratch his head," Styles quipped.



You can't say that about Francine!

ECW IS NOT FOR THE WEAK OF STOMACH

Was it the Georgia heat? Prematch jitters? Bad camel-jerky? Maybe we don't want to know what caused **Sabu** to vomit three times in full view of the camera during his match against **Rob Van Dam** at **Wrestlepalooza '98**. Even though the bout didn't live up to its Match of the Year potential, **Sabu** turned in a gut-wretch-

ing performance.

"ECW! ECW! ECW! ECW! ECW!"
ECW! ECW! ECW! ECW!"

ECW fans have earned a reputation for being a knowledgeable and enthusiastic group but feel the price of admission gives them the right to deride anyone within

earshot. Sometimes their chants are clever. Mostly, they are gross.

The sexy **Francine** is a favorite target. Below are the three latest chants heard at the Arena directed toward her. Note: We've only listed those suitable for publication in our magazine.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I THINK IT'S TIME TO GET MY EYES CHECKED

Anybody who says they didn't fall for the **Sabu/Rob Van Dam** hocus pocus at **Living Dangerously** is lying. Even **Bill Alfonso** couldn't tell them apart.

WE LOVE OUR FANS ...

According to ECW wrestlers, the fans are the essence of everything they do—including interviews:

"If I had the time, I'd kick every

single one of your asses."—**Buh Buh Ray addressing the crowd at Elmhurst, New York, July 3.**

"I hate this city, it's nothing but a damn Yankee town! I'm never coming back here again!"—**Jamie Dundee, making some new friends at the Arena on June 6.**

"I'm through working for you sickos. You people are demented!"—**Al Snow to fans at the Arena who chanted "You sold out!" on June 6.**

... BECAUSE OUR FANS LOVE US

How did these guys get an A+ in Fan Relations, anyway?

"Big" Dick Dudley was popped in the eye at the Sport Fest in Staten Island, New York, by an unprovoked fan on July 17. "Big" Dick went into the crowd to return the favor but the unidentified teen had already fled.

Mahoney caught a face full of chair from a fan who thought he

was a bit overzealous in breaking up a Taz-Bigelow brawl at the Arena on June 6.

Can't wait to see Fan Participation Night.

WRESTLER OF THE HALF-YEAR

Rob Van Dam. Shane Douglas may be "The Franchise," but Van Dam has become "The Show." Fans who were once turned off by RVD's arrogance now wear his shirts and cheer his every move. It seems that winning the TV and tag titles has increased his popularity. Van Dam would rather win Shane's belt than any more hearts, but the fans have gotten behind him whether he likes it or not.

MANAGER OF THE HALF-YEAR

Bill Alfonso. No contest here. Tommy Rich manages the FBI,

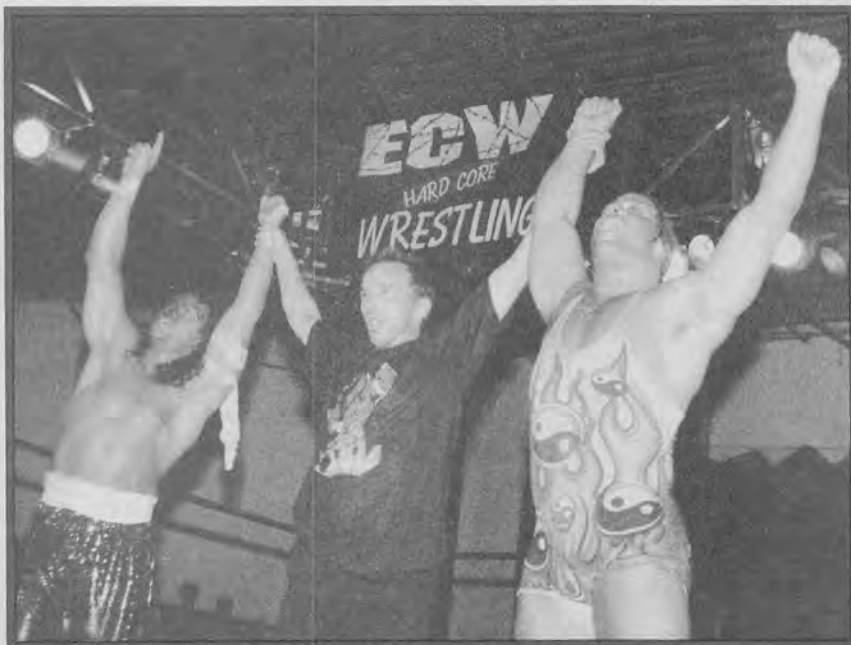
who can't win two matches in a row. Lance Wright manages Danny Doring, Mike Lozansky, Mike Kovacs, and Ulf Hermann, none of whom can win at all. That leaves Fonzie, who's found a way for tag team champs Van Dam and Sabu (can you say *egos*) to peacefully co-exist.



Sandman is the people's choice

MOST POPULAR WRESTLER OF THE HALF-YEAR

The Sandman. Maybe it's his beer-spitting, Metallica-blaring entrance. Maybe it's his reckless use of the rattan cane. Maybe it's just that whole blue-collar thing that the ECW crowd identifies with. Whatever it is, nobody ignites the crowd like The Sandman. The fans love him.



Alfonso should apply for work at the U.N.!

TAG TEAM OF THE HALF-YEAR

Chris Candido and Lance Storm. When tag team partners start wrestling each other after defending the title, you'd expect them to split up or find new partners. Not Candido and Storm. They thrived on the animosity to outperform each other in the ring, and became a better tag team for it. Sure they were forced to defend the title by Paul E., but Candido and Storm held the belts for over seven months.

MOST HATED WRESTLER OF THE HALF-YEAR

Buh Buh Ray Dudley. The fans wouldn't hate Buh Buh Ray so much if he stuck to beating up Tommy Dreamer and Spike, but he often rips the crowd with an assortment of prematch insults, curses, and ethnic slurs. And

injuring Beulah won't win anybody over.

MATCH OF THE HALF-YEAR

Taz vs. Bam Bam Bigelow, March 1, Asbury Park Convention Center. Did Bigelow get a hometown decision over former TV champ Taz at Living Dangerously? The match started as a typical ECW slugfest until Taz sent Bigelow into the seats with a suplex off the runway, but hit his own head on the guard rail. Taz fought the rest of the match with a concussion, but still had the presence of mind to clamp his "Taz-mission" on Bigelow. Ringside observers thought they saw Bam Bam tap his chest in submission, but referee John Finnegan didn't. With new life, Bigelow then backdropped Taz *through the ring*. Taz' body actually went through the canvas! Bigelow needed merely to drag Taz from under the hole and pin him to become the new ECW TV champion.

REST IN PEACE

Former ECW competitor **Louie Spicolli** died on February 15 in San Pedro, California, at age 27.

In what has been the most elaborate tribute to Spicolli to date, the entire ECW staff gathered in the ring for a 10-bell salute prior to the February 21 card at the Arena in Philadelphia.



New Jack & Spike Dudley at the height of ECW madness!



The Bigelow vs. Taz match won't soon be forgotten

THE FIVE MOST EXTREME MOMENTS OF THE HALF-YEAR

1. New Jack and Spike Dudley's leaps at Living Dangerously. In the splat heard around the world, New Jack and Spike splashed D-Von and Buh Buh Ray from the balcony of the Asbury Park Convention Center. A 15-foot drop!

2. Taz and Bigelow go through the ring at Living Dangerously. It would have never happened if Finnegan were in the right posi-

tion, but Taz offered no excuses and neither do we.

3. The Sandman's big fall. In one of ECW's bloodiest matches ever—a Stairway to Hell match between The Sandman and Sabu—the Extreme Icon took a 10-foot fall from the top of a ladder through a ringside table, and won the match.

4. Rob Van Dam's suicide



dives on Bigelow. Van Dam wanted the TV belt so badly that he followed up his suicide dive from the ringpost onto Bigelow with a higher dive that put him into the fourth row and included a somersault for added momentum.

5. D-Von and Buh Buh Ray give Beulah the 3-D. Does **THE WRESTLER** condone the abuse of women? Of course not. But right or wrong, this move is as hardcore as it gets.

OUR FIVE PREDICTIONS FOR THE SECOND HALF OF 1998

1. Taz will win the ECW title from Shane Douglas, abandon his FTW belt, then lose the ECW title to Rob Van Dam. Bill Alfonso has already tried to recruit Taz into his camp because he knows it's just a matter of time before Taz beats Douglas for the belt. Fonzie will lure Taz into a false sense of security, then position Van Dam against him for a title vs. title match. He wants that belt!

2. Lance Storm will replace Chris Candido in the Triple Threat. Although he claims to have no interest in joining the Triple Threat, Lance Storm has become everything Candido once was. He's cocky, he's confident, and he's winning. Shane's the "Franchise," Bam Bam's the enforcer, Lance is the upstart. Where does that leave Candido? On the outside.

3. FMW will try to overtake ECW. Masato Tanaka is here. So are Mike Awesome, Hayabusa, Jinsei Shinzaki, and Atsushi Onita. Word is Hyabusa will be the next FMW wrestler to defect. These guys aren't exactly friends, but can a sense of familiarity draw them together as their presence in ECW increases? We're afraid so.

4. Tommy Dreamer will seriously injure Joel Gertner. Sure, Tommy wants to make Buh Buh Ray and D-Von pay for hurting Beulah, but Gertner's jokes and disparaging remarks buzz in Dreamer's ears like a mosquito. The deed was heinous, but Gertner's behavior is worse. Dreamer wants to teach him a lesson.

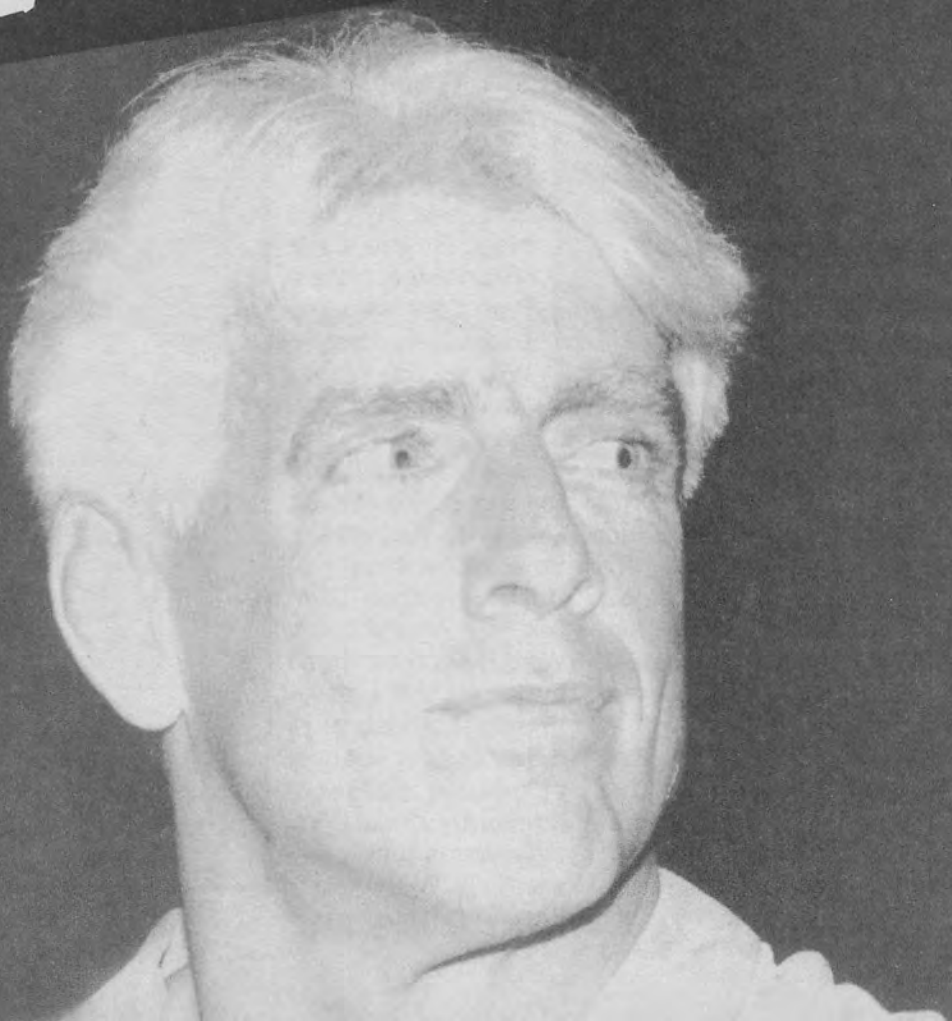
5. Sabu will win the TV title. Sabu is silent but not stupid, and he hates to be shown up by Van Dam. Where does the TV title go if RVD does, in fact, become the next heavyweight champ? We're not sure, but Sabu won't let Van Dam wear both belts. Would he upset Fonzie's plans just to keep pace with "Mr. Monday Night"? You bet.



Expect a big second half from Sabu

RIC FLAIR'S HIATUS:

HOW WILL
IT AFFECT
HIS GAME?



**Battling WCW in
court for months,
Ric Flair had no
choice but to stay
away from the ring
and rest his body.
When he finally
comes back, will he
be better or worse
than when he left?**

By Dave Rosenbaum

GIVEN THE choice—and he likes to say he always has the choice—Ric Flair would rather be in the ring than in the courtroom.

Flair is, after all, a 14-time world champion who has been involved in the wrestling wars since 1972. Flair knows as well as anyone that a ring career doesn't last forever; when your career is rapidly approaching its fourth decade, and your age is rapidly approaching the big five-oh, you're rapidly approaching retirement.

He doesn't have time to wait.

But this time, Flair doesn't have a choice. The legal system says so. He must wait until his contractual differences with WCW are either settled in court or by an

agreement between his lawyers and those of WCW.

Until then, he sits.

And waits.

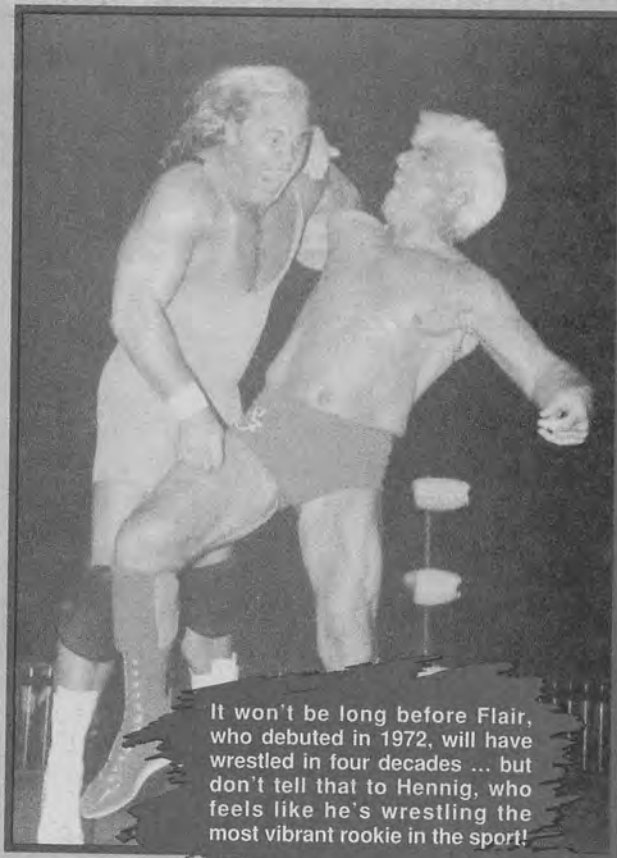
And hopes.

Because at this point in his career, Flair has no idea how he will be affected by an unplanned hiatus of three ... or six ... or nine ... or even 12 months. Or maybe even three years. That's the length of the contract WCW alleges Flair signed back in November 1997.

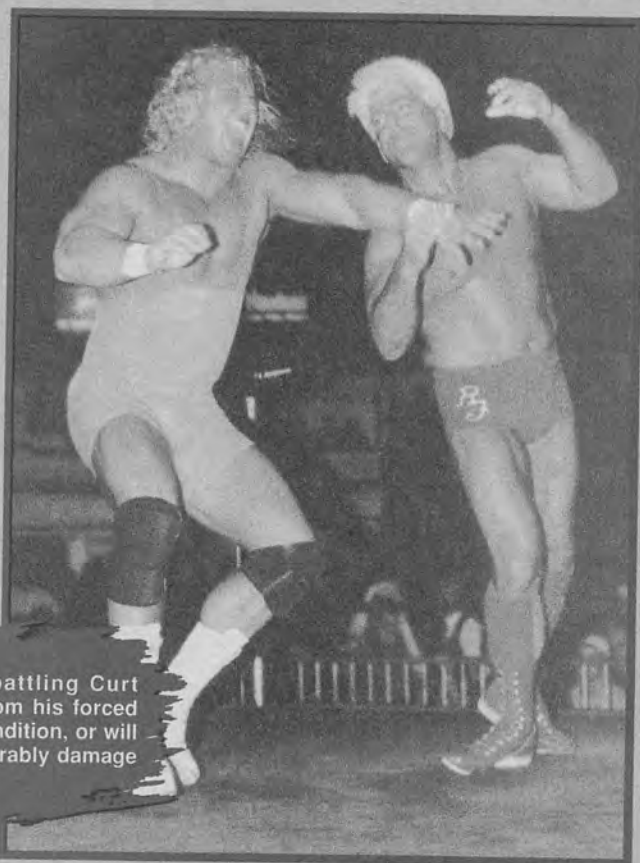
Flair claims differently, and that's where the lawyers come in. According to a lawsuit filed by Flair against WCW on June 11, in which he asked to be relieved of contractual obligations to move to the WWF, he never signed a contract. He signed a letter of agreement, which he claims was voided because WCW violated the agreement.

According to WCW, the letter of agreement was a fully enforceable contract. Once Flair signed, he was WCW property for the next three years.

This issue is for the courts to decide, but there is little doubt

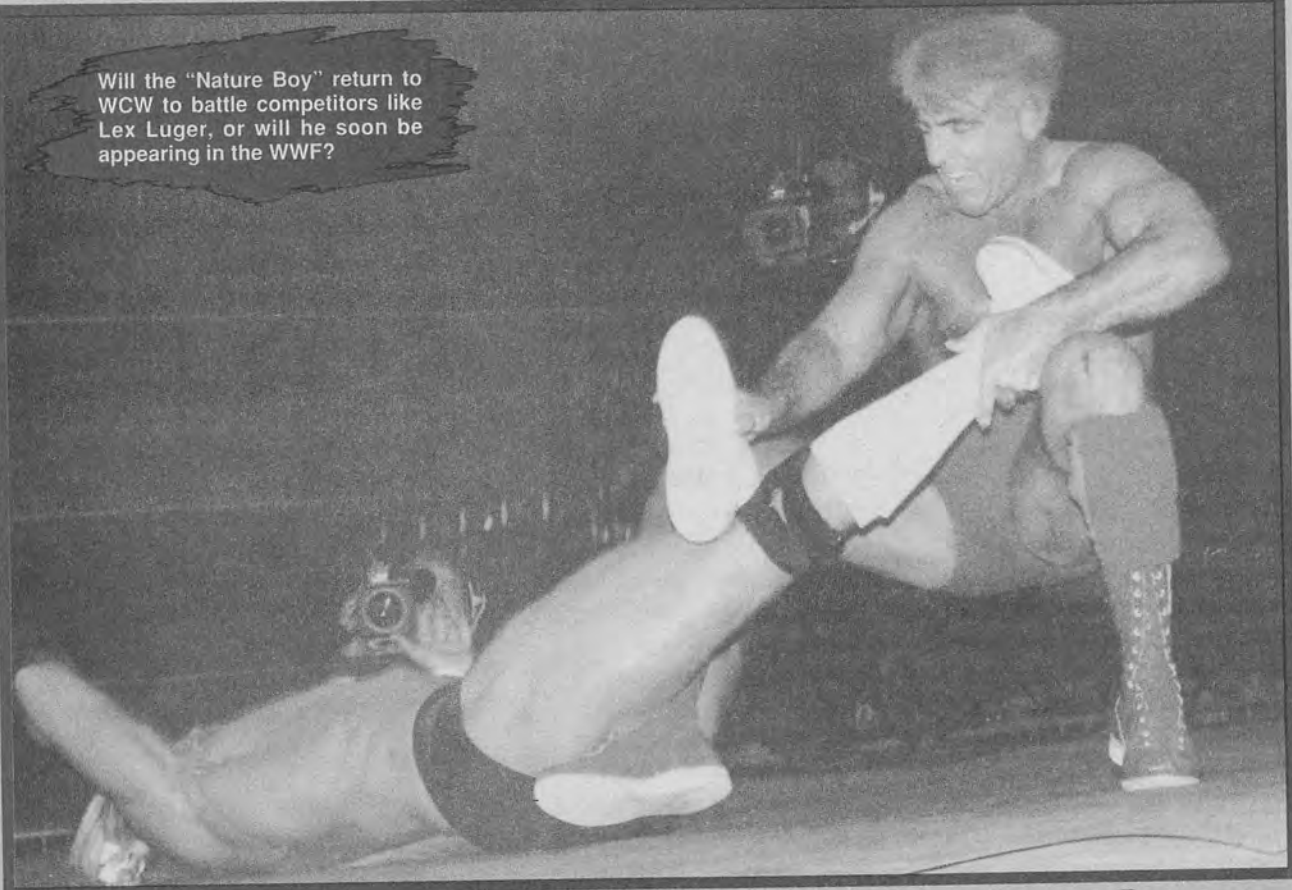


It won't be long before Flair, who debuted in 1972, will have wrestled in four decades ... but don't tell that to Hennig, who feels like he's wrestling the most vibrant rookie in the sport!



Can Ric Flair (battling Curt Hennig) return from his forced hiatus in peak condition, or will the time off irreparably damage his ring skills?

Will the "Nature Boy" return to WCW to battle competitors like Lex Luger, or will he soon be appearing in the WWF?

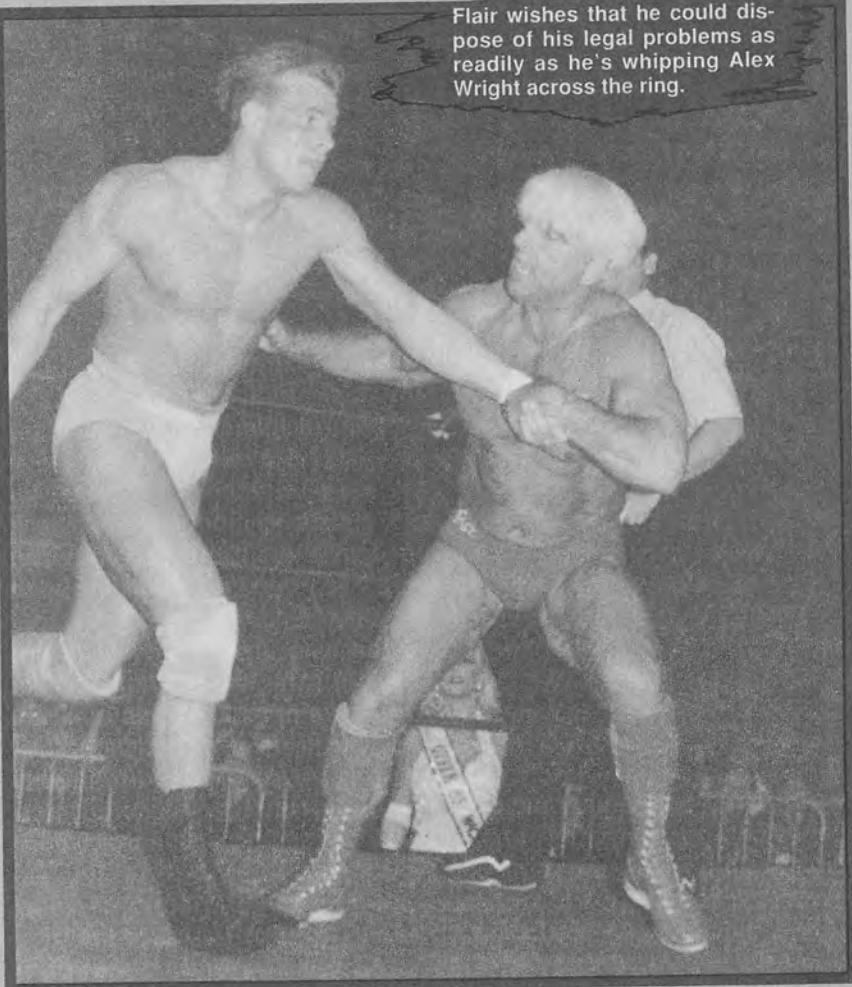


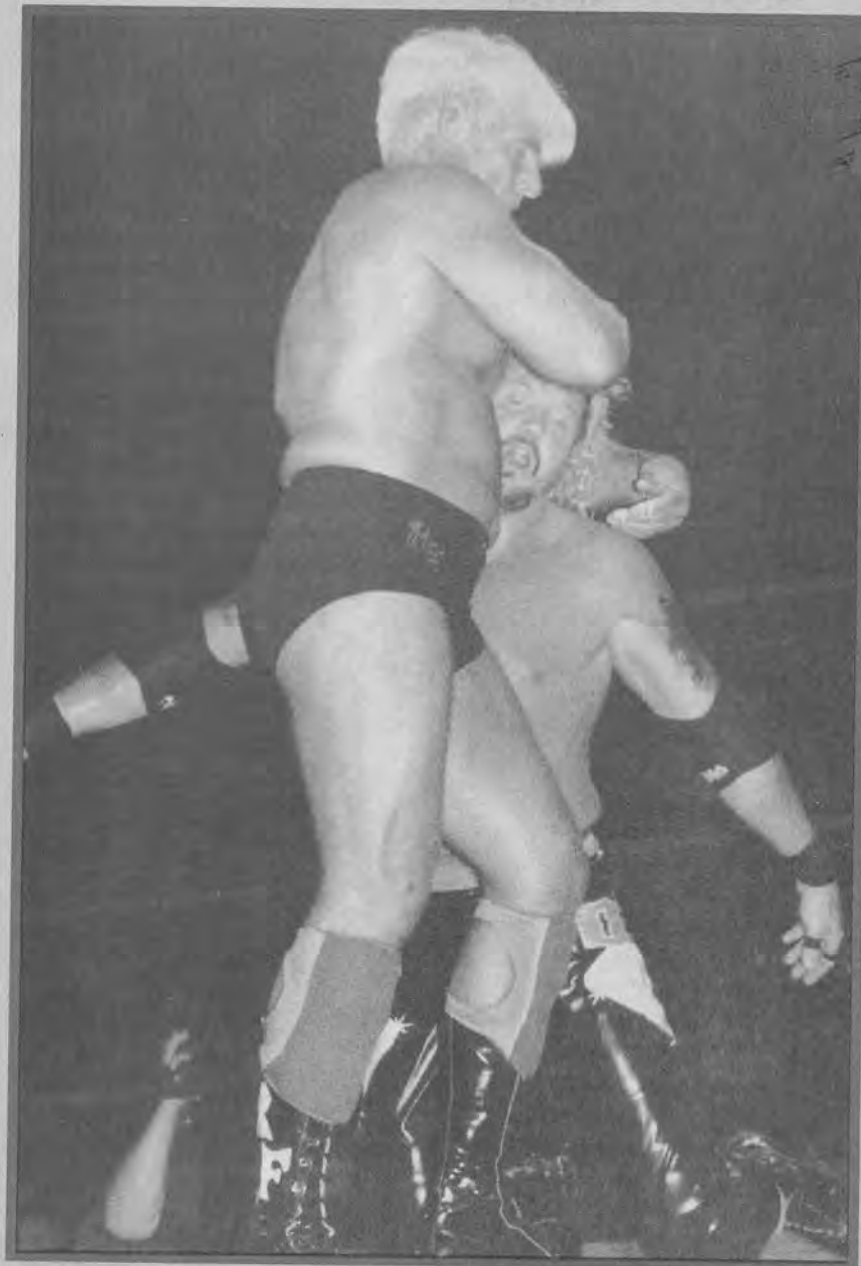
Flair will return to the ring, either as an unhappy camper in WCW, or with a new career start in the WWF. There is also little doubt Flair still has what it takes, mentally and physically, to be a marquee star in either federation. His feud earlier in the year with Bret Hart was notable for the heat generated between the two in both their mental sparring and their classic bouts. The fans wanted more.

They got less.

"Flair is such a great wrestler that even though he's no longer in his prime, he's still better than 95 percent of the wrestlers out there, maybe even 99 percent," Senior Editor Bill Apter said. "I've known Ric for a long time, and I know what he's all about. He has a tremendous amount of pride, and he wouldn't step into the ring just for a paycheck if he knew he was going to embarrass himself. That feud with Bret was hot, and it had the potential to be Feud of the Year. If he eventually jumps to the

Flair wishes that he could dispose of his legal problems as readily as he's whipping Alex Wright across the ring.





There are doubts that Flair (battling Dallas Page) will be wrestling at his best when he returns. Still, 50 percent of Flair is better than 100 percent of many wrestlers in the sport today!

long ring hiatuses. "Your body feels great from the rest, but you're not mentally sharp. You're really not physically sharp, either, because although your body is rested, it needs a jump start. But I think a wrestler reaches a stage in his career where he needs to settle back and take some time off. You can't just keep going at an all-out pace for 30 years. You need to take at least an occasional vacation."

Could this forced hiatus actually benefit Flair and extend his career? Why not? Let's face it: Professional boxers sometimes go a year without fighting. Baseball players get four months off every year. Wrestlers go at it night after night, 52 weeks out of the year, in the most grueling sport in the world. Is the status quo the best way to go? Maybe not.

"This sport is physically exhausting," Austin admitted. "You can never afford to let your guard down or take a night off. You're always thinking about your next match, your next opponent, and what you have to do to get ready. Yeah, I'd love a schedule like those boxers get, defend the title every five or six months, then take a month off after fighting before training again. But I can't do that. I have to defend the belt all the time. Does it take its toll? I'll tell you in 10 years."

Few wrestlers over the past three decades have been as active as Flair. Indeed, this rest should do him some good. Don't expect Flair to come back in top form. But within a few months, he should be as good as he was last February, when Hart vs. Flair was the hottest thing in wrestling.

That's a Flair worth waiting for. □

WWF, there's no doubt what he'll want: shots at WWF World champion Steve Austin."

What else could possibly be of any interest to Flair, a two-time WWF World champion in 1992? Austin combines tremendous strength with outstanding mat skills. He is young and in excellent shape. Austin is vastly improved since his WCW days of the early-1990s, while Flair has certainly slipped at least a half-notch.

There's no way Flair could expect to invade the WWF and immediately get shots at Austin.

Most likely, "Stone-Cold" would

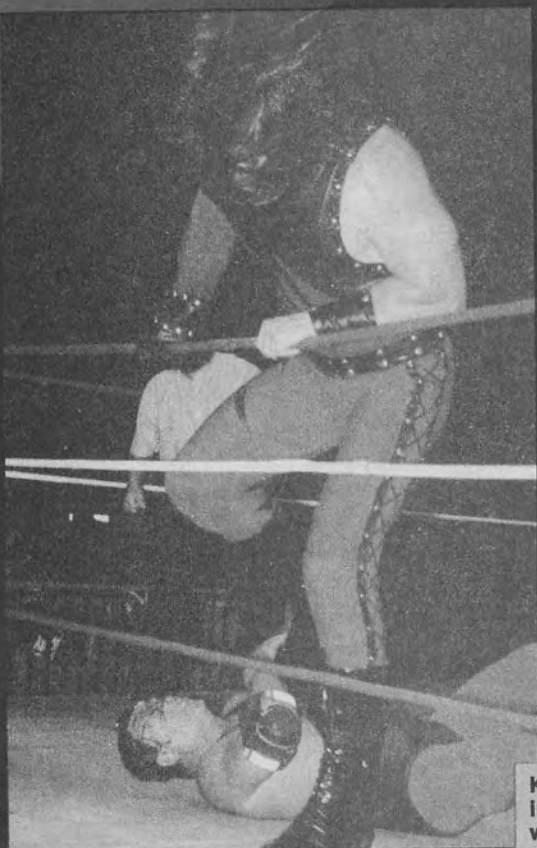
eat him alive. Flair is not used to long layoffs. During his WCW World title heyday in the 1980s, he often defended the belt two or three times a week, and would only take vacations after losing the belt. Usually, he came back after two weeks or a month and immediately regained the title.

So Flair is used to taking some time off, then coming back fresh and ready to win. But three months? Six months? Nine months? That's a situation Flair has never faced.

"It's not easy," said veteran Jerry Lawler, who has had a few

BEARER ... CORNETTE ... VINCE ... HALES:

**WHY IS
EVERYONE
MESSING
WITH KANE'S
MIND?**



Kane stomps on Jerry Lawler in a match he didn't want to wrestle in a place to which he didn't want to travel.

Kane really wouldn't mind if everybody just left him alone, but that's not quite an option ... at least for now. Oddly enough, he has found friendship in an unlikely place

By Dave Rosenbaum

AS FAR AS Kane was concerned, June 23 was supposed to be a welcome day off. No WWF matches scheduled. No training with manager/father Paul Bearer. No looking at films or even thinking about wrestling. A day off. A well-deserved day off. He was looking forward to it.

But then Dad called, and there went the day off.

"Randy Hales just called me from Power Pro Wrestling in Memphis," Bearer said.

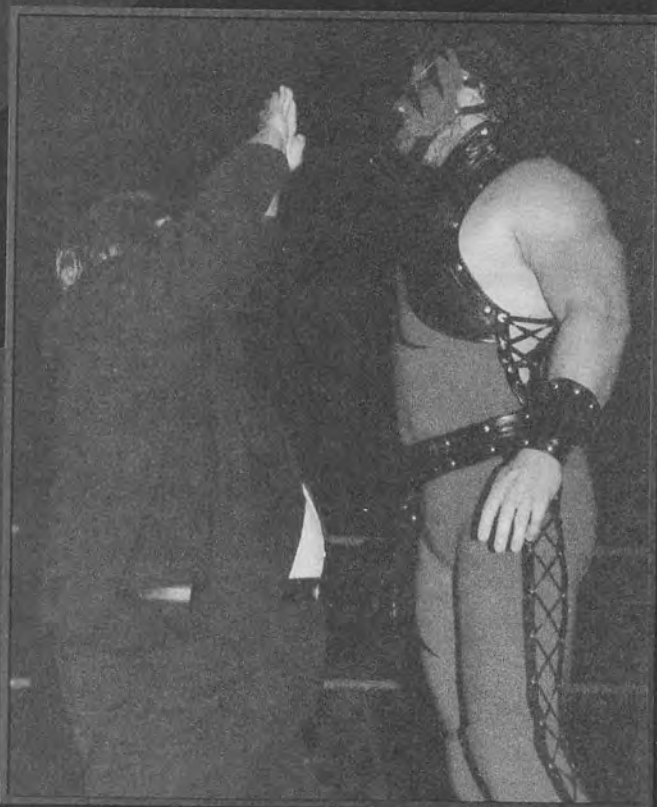
"So?"

"He wanted to know if you would come down and wrestle Jerry Lawler."

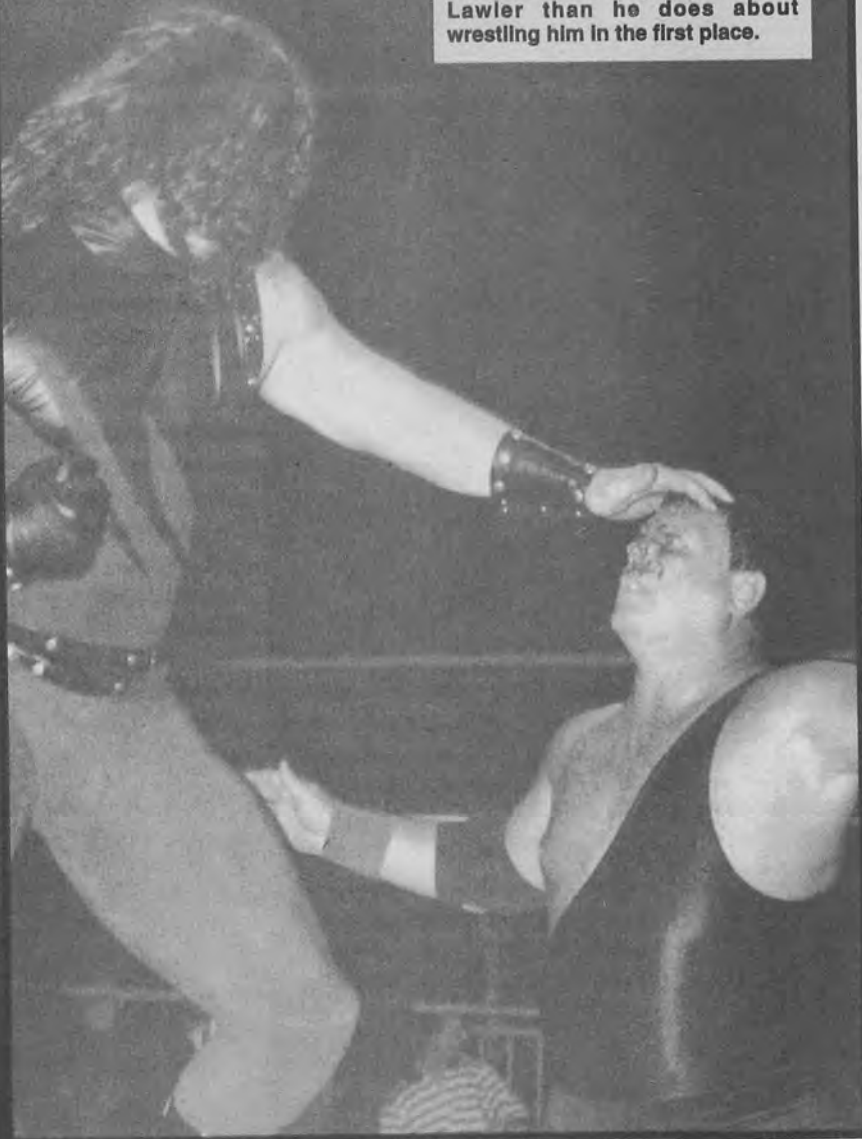
"Yeah? When?"

"June 23."

In an odd turn of events—or perhaps another example of messing with Kane's mind—Paul Bearer (below) was replaced by Jim Cornette (right) as Kane's manager for the night.



"The King" appears to be begging for mercy, but Kane cares even less about being merciful to Lawler than he does about wrestling him in the first place.



Lawler's corner."

"It's a favor."

"Fine. I'll do it."

The match was a joke. Stacey, Lawler's girlfriend, attacked Kane with her shoe as he was pounding on Lawler. Kane turned around to chokeslam Stacey, but Lawler threw fire at him. Kane went nuts. He chokeslammed Cornette and referee Bill Rush, earning a disqualification loss.

"I was sick of everybody," Kane explained afterward in a terse, five-word interview with the media before storming off the scene.

Who could blame him? First Hales tried to use Kane in his private war against Lawler. Then Bearer, knowing Kane would not refuse him, enlisted him for a meaningless match. And as far as Kane was concerned, Cornette double-crossed him. Where was Cornette when Stacey jumped into the ring? No-

where. Rooting for Lawler, probably.

Everybody's using Kane. Bearer constantly uses Kane in his war against The Undertaker. And Vince McMahon ... he might be the biggest user of all.

McMahon's been at war with WWF World champion Steve Austin for several months, and who better to enlist in this war than Kane, a man desperate for the belt? Kane won the title from Austin at the King of the Ring pay-per-view, but Austin goaded him into a rematch and regained the championship the next night.

"You're stupid," McMahon told Kane. He wasn't trying to insult

"June 23? That's my day off."

"Yeah, well not anymore," Bearer said. "Listen, we're doing him a favor. Lawler's out of control down there, and you never much liked him anyway."

"I hate him."

"Good. So you're in."

"I guess so."

Perhaps if Kane and Bearer had a normal father-son relationship, Kane would have put up more of a fight. But their estrangement had lasted too long. Kane wanted to do things for his father, just like his father wanted to do things for him. He couldn't say no, wouldn't say no, so he agreed to

wrestle a match he had no interest in wrestling.

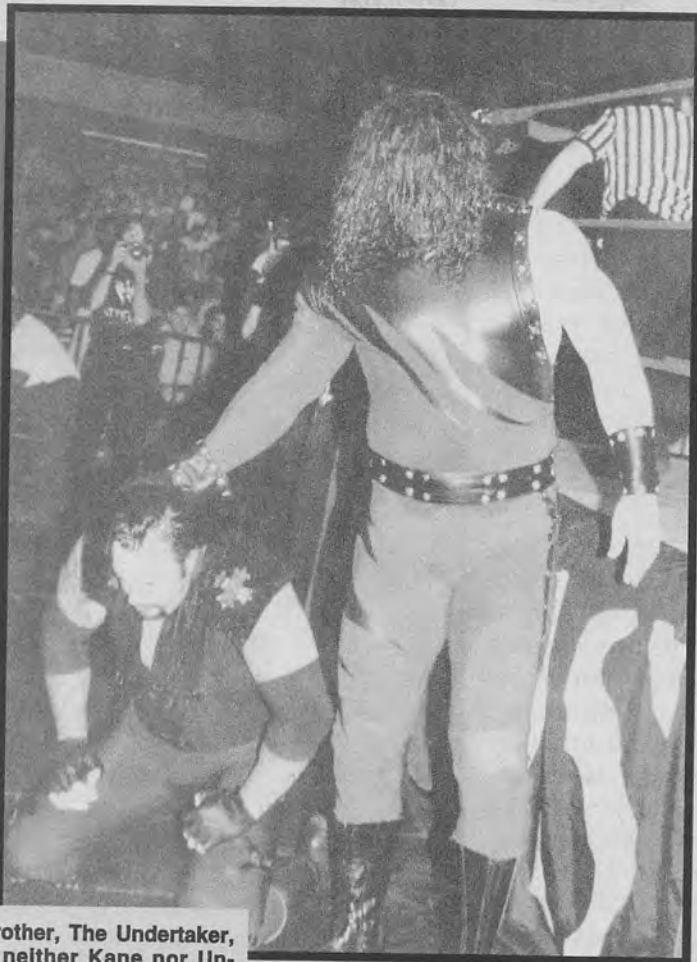
Then, the night before the Memphis card, Bearer was injured by Undertaker and couldn't make the trip. So he called an old friend.

"Hey, buddy," Bearer said to Jim Cornette.

"What?" Cornette responded, already suspicious.

"I need you to do something for me. Kane's wrestling Lawler tomorrow night in Memphis and I can't make it. Would you mind being in his corner?"

"Kane's corner?" Cornette answered. "I'd rather be in



Battling his brother, The Undertaker, is something neither Kane nor Undertaker really wanted to do in the first place.

Kane, although he did that, too. He was trying to inspire him to go after Austin with renewed vigor. Which is exactly what Kane did; Austin soon replaced Undertaker as Kane's arch-rival.

With seemingly nowhere to turn, with evidently nobody out for his best interests, and with everybody using him for their own special interests, Kane has apparently turned to the man who has never used him: his brother, Undertaker.

Why not? Undertaker never wanted to wrestle Kane in the first place. Undertaker had secretly prayed for happy reunion with his brother. Now Kane is finding out that blood is thicker than water ... and thicker than his father's blood.

There's little doubt that Undertaker and Kane are in cahoots. At King of the Ring, Undertaker

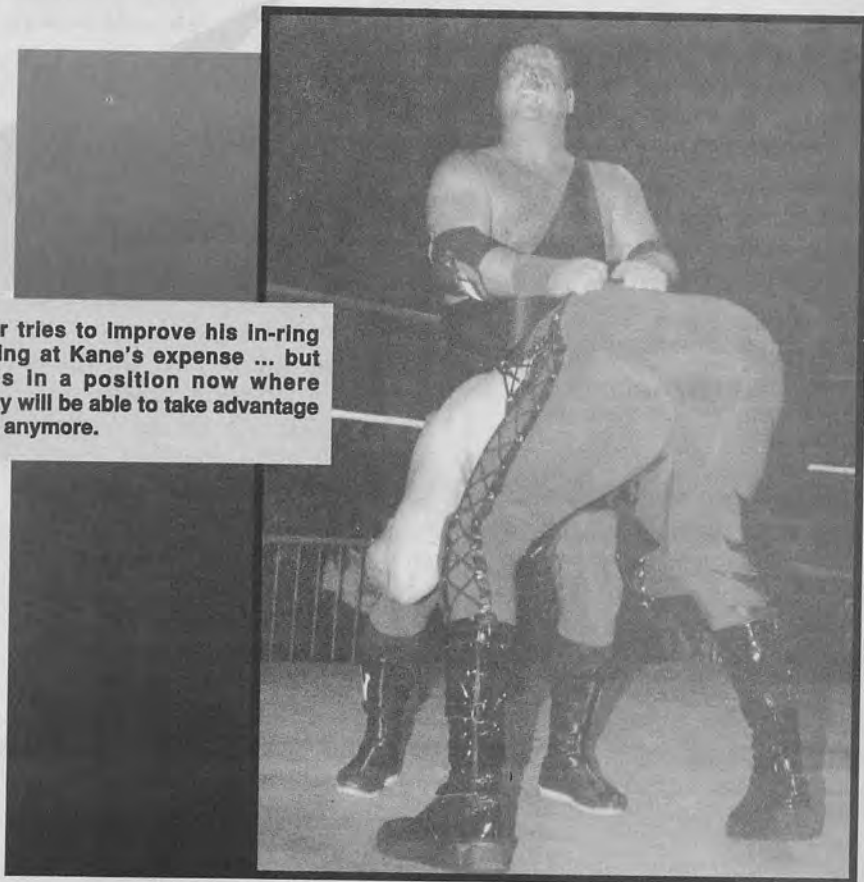
saved Kane by striking Austin with a chair. When The Undertaker, Kane, and Mankind were scheduled to wrestle a three-way match that would determine the number-one contender to the World title, only Kane and Mankind appeared. Or so it seemed. After winning, Kane removed his mask and revealed himself to be The Undertaker.

"How'd he get that mask?" McMahon wondered.

Then, after Mankind and Kane won the WWF World tag belts from The New Age Outlaws, a rematch was ordered with Austin and Undertaker as the enforcers. When the referee got kayoed, Undertaker prevented Austin from counting a pin for the New Age Outlaws, and Austin prevented Undertaker from counting a pin for the champs.

Kane has finally found a friend in his brother. And if they form a team, Kane can guarantee that he'll never be used again. ☐

Lawler tries to improve his in-ring standing at Kane's expense ... but Kane's in a position now where nobody will be able to take advantage of him anymore.



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YOUR LETTERS

(Continued from page 5)

WCW, all anyone
has said about
him is that he
should ditch Ra-
ven and wrestle
on his own. Now
he's doing that
and hardly any-
body is giving
him credit for wis-
ing up.

Saturn has over-
come a lot of ad-
versity. All he wants
to do now is have a
successful career
on his own. That's
why he attacked
Kanyon. He doesn't
want anybody's
help. Anybody who
doubts his talent is
out of his mind.
Saturn was already
TV champ once,
and he could win
that title again—if
Raven and Kanyon stay out of his
way.

THOMAS DELANEY
Worcester, MA

ULTIMATE INSULT

I usually agree with every-
thing I read in your magazine,
but I cannot understand how
you guys gave The Ultimate
Warrior a "thumbs down" (Oc-
tober 1998). As far as I know,
he hasn't done anything wrong.
He hasn't even returned yet. I
hardly think it is his fault that
rumors of his return are being
spread throughout the industry.
Nor is it his fault WCW can't
give him what he wants. I can
think of dozens of wrestlers who
deserve a "thumbs down" before
the Warrior. Why don't you wait
until he does something wrong
before you criticize him?

AMY WATSON
Pittsburgh, PA



DX's Billy Gunn struggled against Mankind on July 13, the night he and Jesse James lost the WWF tag belts to Mankind and Kane. Marcy Steiner is disturbed by the recent struggles of the popular clique.

BACK TO WORK

I used to be a huge fan of
DeGeneration X, but it seems
like their preoccupation with
clowning around has finally cost
them in the ring.

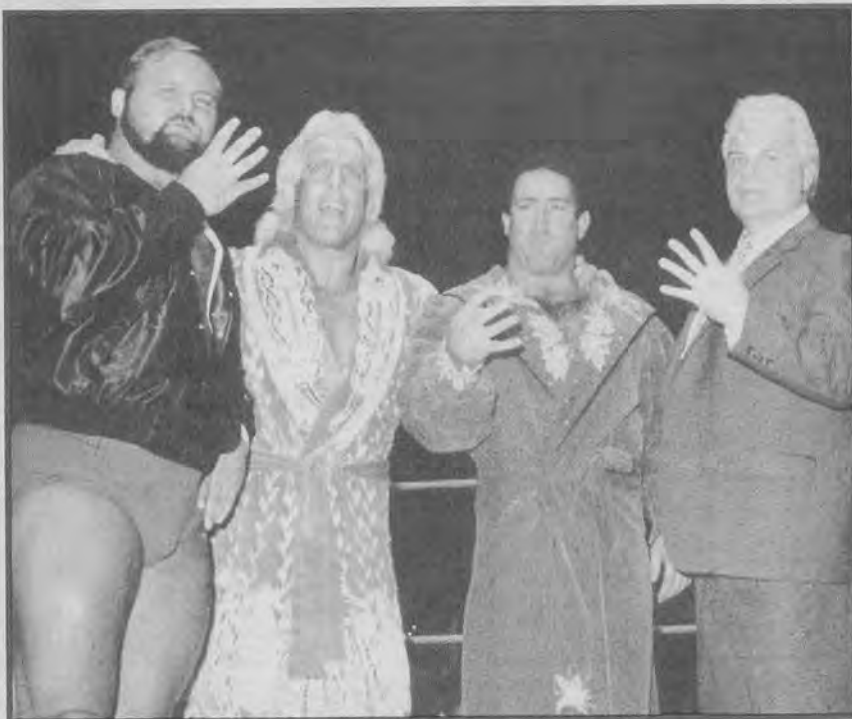
I am speaking, of course,
about "Triple-H" losing the Euro-
pean title to D-Lo Brown and
The New Age Outlaws dropping
the tag belts to Kane and
Mankind. Instead of doing all the
crotch-chopping and name-call-
ing, Hunter and friends might
want to head to the gym to work
on getting their belts back. I can
accept all the extracurricular
stuff as long as they win, but DX
hasn't been doing very much of
that lately.

MARCY STEINER
Orlando, FL ☐

Send YOUR LETTERS to:
Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034

WHAT'S HAPPENING

(Continued from page 7)



Three of the original Four Horsemen, with manager J.J. Dillon, in a photo taken back in 1987. Tully Blanchard (third from left) is hoping Arn Anderson (far left) will not agree to put together a new group of Horsemen

bourne's got no brains, and now he ain't got no manager, either!"

Responded Osbourne: "The Master didn't leave me. I fired him."

Veteran **Tully Blanchard**, though still semi-retired, is back in the news again. He recently won the New Dimension Wrestling title from **Buddy Landell**. I asked him what he thought about the possibility of a new version of **The Four Horsemen** being formed. If it happens, the new group would likely be headed by original Horseman **Arn Anderson** and would have no involvement from **Ric Flair**, as Ric is still involved in a legal dispute with WCW and might never return to the federation.

"Arn will always be my friend and a man whom I admire," said Blanchard, "but I have to be blunt and tell him to stick to his guns and leave the legacy of The Four Horsemen alone. Me, Arn, Ric Flair, and J.J. Dillon made history. We were a class act. **Ole Anderson** fit right in there, too. But the Horsemen without Ric Flair is just not the Horsemen. That part of our lives is over. No matter how many people

plead with Arn to put a new group of Horsemen together, I have to hope he won't cave in and do it."

Eric Bischoff has accomplished some amazing things during his time in charge of World Championship Wrestling. However, Eric's attempts at standup comedy on *Nitro* this summer were deplorable. On several occasions, Bischoff performed monologues stolen from comedian **Jay Leno**, who had used the material just a few days earlier on *The Tonight Show*. Eric's desire to lure

Eric Bischoff, you're no comedian, and you have no business wasting time trying to be one on Nitro. That seems to be the view of just about everyone who tuned in to Nitro in late-July.

Jay into the ring aside, I'm not convinced this was good for the sport.

The people at Time Warner were probably impressed, since Leno's appearance at Road Wild garnered a lot of mainstream media attention that could have generated interest from customers who wouldn't ordinarily purchase a pay-per-view. The problem is that true wrestling fans were forced to sit through something that didn't belong on a pro wrestling card, and most of them didn't like it one bit. The people who run wrestling companies should *always* think of their most loyal fans first—or they run the risk of alienating them forever.

That's what's happening. I'll see you at the matches! □





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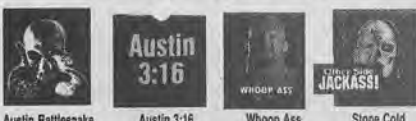
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NO HOLDS BARRED

(Continued from page 8)

ceeded more in the Monday night wars? The WWF. The Vince/Austin saga, along with battles between DX and the Nation, along with LOD 2000 and Paul Ellering, have brought the Stamford-based promotion success that has surpassed anything that the '80s could have done. No basketball or football players, nor a late-night talk show host can deliver more than what they currently have.

WCW continues to lag behind, securing only spotty Monday victories that eventually succumb to the momentum of the WWF. Bash at the Beach posted an outstanding buy rate, but the taste of victory was short-lived and could not be parlayed into anything resembling momentum. Ironically, the long-term cure for WCW's ills may reside in the



WCW's use of mainstream celebrities like Dennis Rodman has drawn interest from the mainstream media, but, in Steve Anderson's view, will have a detrimental long-term effect on the company.

men who bleed and sweat in their rings. Malenko instead of Malone. Raven as opposed to Rodman. Celebrities certainly bring interest, but they are not making a significant and lasting impact in this long-standing WWF/WCW battle.

Perhaps it's a sign of insecurity

that a promoter feels that the fans could not possibly be interested in just wrestling. A celebrity has to be thrown into the mix to get on the AP wire or a video feed to be picked up on the network news. What they do not understand is that the multitude of fans who have discovered and re-discovered wrestling want to see just that—wrestling.

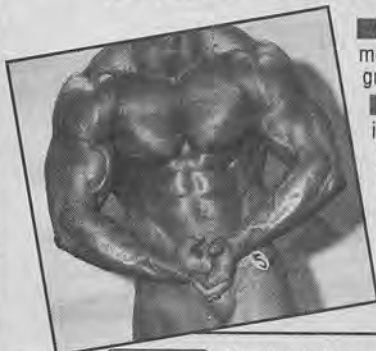
This is not to say that celebrities should never be used. If used sparingly, a celebrity can bring novelty and add to the entertainment value. But for them to take spotlight matches away from hard-working, veteran wrestlers can only bring resentment in the locker room, and indifference from the fans. And that's certainly not a winning formula in the battle of the Big Two.

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CORRESPONDENTS REPORTS

(Continued from page 14)

Guerrero defeated Chavo Guerrero Jr. in a hair vs. hair match ... Kevin Nash & Konnan defeated Disco Inferno & Alex Wright ... WCW TV champ Booker T defeated Bret Hart by disqualification ... The Giant pinned Kevin Greene ... WCW World champ Bill Goldberg pinned Curt Hennig.

Wilmington, DE (Correspondent—Ron Schwan): Jim Cornette has never really gotten along with The Headbangers, but he was willing to put his differences with them aside to help them defeat Ace Darling and Devon Storm, who just happened to be managed by The Master, Cornette's rival in the East Coast Wrestling Association. Earlier in the show, The Master scolded Cornette for entering "The Master's ring" and trying to take his spotlight. As he challenged Cornette, Cornette was attacked by Ace and Devon, but Mosh and Thrasher ran them off, saving Cornette.

Later, even before the match had started, Cornette and The Master were trying to get at each other. In the ring, though, Mosh and Thrasher attacked Ace and Devon and had both men on the defensive right away. All four men then began brawling in the ring, with The Headbangers getting the better of the exchange.

Each time The Master tried to interfere, Cornette charged around the ring and stopped him with a whack from his trusty tennis racket. At one point, Ace and Thrasher collided in mid-ring, with both men crashing to the mat as Storm and Mosh battled in a corner. While the referee tried to break up the fight between them, The Master ran in and placed Ace on top of Thrasher. Cornette then leaped into the ring and knocked The Master from the ring to the arena floor.

While everyone was distracted, Mosh grabbed Cornette's racket



Ken Shamrock went to the air a few times to knock down Owen Hart during their match in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He relied on his favorite hold to finish Owen off.

and smashed it into Darling's head, knocking him out cold. Thrasher then pinned Ace for the victory.

In other bouts: Boogie Woogie Brown pinned The Commando ... Twigg Ramirez pinned J.R. Ryder ... Mark Shrader beat Mr. Ooh La La ... Christian Cage pinned ECWA heavyweight champ Glen Osbourne to win the title ... Cowboy Blaze, Thunder, & Jeff Peterson beat The Persian Prince, Chris Krueger, & Viper ... Lance Diamond wrestled Inferno Kid to a no-contest ... ECWA Mid-Atlantic champ Reckless Youth pinned Mike Quackenbush.

Bethlehem, PA (Correspondent—Eric Raskin): Owen Hart is a smart enough wrestler to know that he shouldn't challenge Ken Shamrock to a technical battle. Maybe that's why he started this contest by trading punches with the 1998 King of the Ring.

After landing some punches, Owen did connect with a dropkick, but one back bodydrop later, he was on the mat. To his credit, Owen quickly recovered and kicked Shamrock in the stomach. With Shamrock

on the mat, Owen cinched on an armbar, but he had to break it when Shamrock reached the ropes.

Later, Owen took control again, but this time it was outside the ring. He leveled Shamrock with a clothesline, then stomped his knee on the floor. Back in the ring, Owen worked over the weakened knee and applied a leglock. Shamrock rallied, though, and nailed Owen with a belly-to-belly suplex. Owen retaliated with a spinning back kick before locking on a Boston crab. After Owen broke the hold, he weaved Shamrock's damaged leg through a chair. As he jumped from the top rope toward Shamrock's knee, Shamrock blocked Owen by lifting his foot.

Shamrock's advantage didn't last long, though, as Owen once again locked on a Boston crab. Eventually, Shamrock crawled his way to the ropes, forcing a break. Shamrock then recovered with a dropkick and a powerslam. Owen surprised him with a power bomb and then another Boston crab. But as Hart tried to turn the hold into a "sharpshooter," Shamrock muscled his way out of the hold. Once free, he snapped on an anklelock and got Owen to submit.

In other bouts: The Headbangers defeated The Midnight Express ... Faarooq beat Kama Mustafa ... X-Pac beat D-Lo Brown ... The Disciples of Apocalypse beat LOD 2000 ... WWF European champion Hunter Hearst Helmsley beat Mark Henry ... Steve Austin, Vader, & The Undertaker defeated Kane, Mankind, & Rocky Maivia ... Marc Mero beat 2 Cold Scorpio ... Jeff Jarrett beat Steve Blackman ... WWF World tag team champions Billy Gunn & Jesse James beat Los Boricuas. □

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YOU ASKED US

(Continued from page 16)

Q: "This question is for Jim Cornette: Jim, what will you be doing now that you have resigned as the manager of The Midnight Express?"—Lana Phipps, Devon, PA

A: "As you know, young lady, James E. Cornette is one of the finest purveyors of wrestling talent in the industry," he said. "That's why the WWF has put me back to work as a talent scout. Nowadays, I attend a number of NWA and other independent wrestling cards, always on the lookout for a prospect or two. As for The Midnight Express, I tried my damndest to help out Bob Holly and Bart Gunn, but they just weren't NWA material—just like The Rock 'n' Roll Express and Jeff Jarrett proved to be subpar. The NWA stands for wrestling, not that 'tough man' garbage. When Holly and Gunn agreed to fight each other, I knew it was all over, so I got out of there before they could embarrass me any more."

...

Q: "My question is for Juventud Guerrera: Juvi, why don't you get back into tag team action?"

Rey Misterio Jr. is back, and you two would make a great pair, especially against The Flock. You need more than just Van Hammer watching your back."—George Langley, Marco Island, FL

A: "Rey Misterio Jr. and I have wrestled as a tag team on several occasions," Juvi began. "But I prefer wrestling *against* him, believe it or not, because he forces me to stay sharp, to come up with new moves, and to become a better defensive wrestler. I know that when I wrestle him, I can expect a clean, competitive match, and I actually enjoy our little game of oneupmanship whenever we square off. Because wrestling against Rey makes me elevate my game all the time, Rey actually does help me with my battles against The Flock. He keeps me focused and ready for anything. I know that if I can do well against Rey Misterio, then I can hold my own against anybody." □

Send your questions to:
YOU ASKED US, c/o THE WRESTLER
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As everyone knows, Jim Cornette no longer manages Bart Gunn and Bob Holly, The Midnight Express. But he keeps busy working as a talent scout for the WWF.

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Nov. 1977: Bruno Sammartino vs. Superstar Graham: The Slaughter Must Be Stopped ... Now! Also: Snuka-Studd, Jones-Slater, Gagne & Brunzell, Ox Baker, Mil Mascaras, Stasiak & Steele, Rick Steamboat, Dino Bravo.

Dec. 1978: The Injury And The Giant Must Keep Secret. Also: Victor Rivera, Brisco-Spoiler, Heenan & Bockwinkel, Tully Blanchard, Mulligan, Dino Bravo.

March 1979: Backlund vs. Ladd: Did Bruno's "Interference" Cost Ladd The WWWF Title? Also: Angelo Mosca, Dick Murdoch, Peter Maivia, Bob Orton Jr., Bockwinkel-Rhodes, Brisco-Race, Crusher Blackwell, Lewin-T. Funk.

May 1979: Paul Jones-Rick Steamboat Feud: Who Is Really To Blame? Also: Valiant, Jack Brisco, Larry Hennig, Johnson-King, Lanza-Mulligan, Chief Jay Strongbow, Snuka-Patera.

July 1979: Ernie Ladd's Claim: "Mr. Wrestling II Uses A Loaded Mask!" Also: Backlund-Race, Andre-Baker, Bruno Sammartino, Nick Bockwinkel, Dick Slater.

Sept. 1979: A New—And Deadly—Feud For Rick Steamboat. Also: Roddy Piper, Superstar Graham, Backlund-Brower, Mil Mascaras, Greg Gagne, The Bruiser-Brody, Dino Bravo.

March 1980: Bruno Sammartino: "I Know The Secret That Could End Bob Backlund's Reign!" Also: Ric Flair, Andre-Brody, Blackjack Mulligan, Bobby Heenan, Murdoch-Race, Mr. Wrestling II, Nick Bockwinkel.

April 1980: Did Ken Patera Destroy Dusty Rhodes' Bionic Elbow? Also: Terry Funk, Kevin Von Erich, DiBiase-Backlund, Bockwinkel & Heenan, Baba-Race, Mr. Wrestling II, Youngblood & Steamboat.

Aug. 1980: The Reign Of Bloodshed Begins: Stevens & Valentine Win The NWA Tag Team Title! Also: Kerry Von Erich, Backlund & Skandland, Nick Bockwinkel, Zbyszko-Bruno, Keim-Muraco, Sammons, Wrestling II-Idol.

Sept. 1980: Why Ernie Ladd Says ... "I'm Tired Of Being Your King." Also: Rick Steamboat, Mad Dog Vachon, Bugsy McGraw, Patera-Patterson, Manny Fernandez, Bob Backlund, Greg Gagne, Mike Sharpe.

Oct. 1980: Kevin Von Erich Wins The Missouri Title From Kevin Von Erich! Also: Mr. Wrestling II, Pedro Morales, Superstar Graham, Dusty Rhodes, Idol-Race.

Feb. 1981: Larry Zbyszko's Claim: "Tony Garea Begged Me Not To Hurt Him!" Also: The Grappler, Race-Patera, Hussellin, Humberdink-Rhodes, Gilberts, Mr. Wrestling II, Bravo-Bockwinkel.

June 1981: Bruno Sammartino: "I Want To Break Stan Hansen's Neck!" Also: Ted DiBiase, Garea & Martel, Mike Graham, Mongolian Stomper, Piper-Superstar.

Jan. 1982: Rich vs. Masked Superstar: Can Tommy Rich Survive As Georgia's Last Hero? Also: Bockwinkel-Atlas, Mascaras-Steamboat, Sullivan-Taylor, Bruno.

March 1982: U.S. Champion Slaughter vs. Former NWA Champion Race: How Harley Race's Attempt To Win An "Easy" Title Ended In Disaster. Also: Jimmy Snuka, Flair-Idol, Steve Keim, Steamboat-Patterson, Fuji-Albano-Saito, Bruno Sammartino Jr., Bruiser-Sullivan.

April 1982: How Jack Brisco Controls Ric Flair's Championship Destiny. Also: Tito Santana, Valentine-Atlas, Bob Roop, Armstrongs, John Studd, Eric Embry.

June 1982: Ric Flair vs. Rick Steamboat: How The NWA Belt Strangled Wrestling's Greatest Friendship. Also: Piper-Armstrong, Hussellin Arab, Bruno Sammartino, Adonis & Ventura.

July 1982: Harley Race—His Destiny Is In The Hands Of Tommy Rich. Also: Rick Steamboat, Chief Jay Strongbow, Buzz Sawyer, Ric Flair, Roddy Piper.

Aug. 1982: Nick Bockwinkel: "Tommy Rich Is Too Stupid To Be Champion!" Also: Putski-Adonis, Blackjack Mulligan Jr., Roddy Piper, Rick Steamboat, Lawler-Kaufman.

Sept. 1982: Dusty Rhodes Returns To Florida: The Tragic Comeback That Should Not Have Happened. Also: Manny Fernandez, Armstrong-Piper, Blassie-Mulligan, Japan, Bockwinkel-Hogan.

Dec. 1982: Morales vs. Snuka: Does Pedro Deserve To Be Intercontinental Champion? Also: Bob Orton Jr., Kamala, Rich & Rhodes, Barry Windham, Ted DiBiase, JYD-Bockwinkel.

Feb. 1983: Exclusive Coverage: Nick Bockwinkel Regains The AWA Title From Otto Wanz. Also: Backlund-Graham, Rich-Sawyer, Barry Windham, Martel & Garea.

May 1983: What Will Happen When The Samoans Become Too Smart For Capt. Lou Albano? Also: Eddie Gilbert, Kerry-Race, Ladd & Rhodes, Flair-Orndorff.

June 1983: Flair-Windham Match Spurs Controversy: Should The NWA Champion Be Allowed To Choose His Challengers? Also: Ivan Koloff, Bruiser Brody, Kerry Von Erich, Andre-Kamala, Brazil-Valentine.

July 1983: Ric Flair: "I Wrestle The Men Backlund Is Afraid Of." Also: Putski-Adonis, Kevin Sullivan, Bob Roop, Martel-Heenan.

Sept. 1983: Nick Bockwinkel Forces Hulk Hogan Into Exile: And Only The Fans Can Bring Him Back. Also: Briscoes, Blackwell-Kerry-Race, Mulligan & Windham.

Nov. 1983: Target—Harley Race! Can Dusty Rhodes Fulfill His American Dream A Third Time? Also: Rick Rude, Gagne & Brunzell, Tito Santana, Von Erichs-Freebirds.

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March 1984: Is Tito Santana Trying To Blackmail The WWF? Also: Wayne & Sawyer, Hogan-Race, David Von Erich, Jesse Ventura.

June 1984: David Von Erich—We'll Never Forget You. Also: Billy Jack, Flair-Race, Bockwinkel-Bravo, Brickhouse Brown.

Aug. 1984: Garvin vs. Roberts: "Hands Of Stone" Crushes "The Snake." Also: Freebirds-Destruction Inc., Sawyer-Sullivan, Lawler & Dillon, McDaniel-Race.

Sept. 1984: Kerry Von Erich Wins The NWA Title: For David ... For Texas ... For Wrestling! Also: Billy Jack, Bundy & Superstar-Road Warriors, Piper & Orndorff-Johnson & Atlas, Rick Martel.

Nov. 1984: The \$50,000 Full-Nelson Challenge Match: Billy Jack Gets Revenge Against Superstar Graham. Also: Piper-Hogan, Heenan & Saito, Brody & Hansen, Von Erichs.

Dec. 1984: The Tully Blanchard-Rick Steamboat Feud: Will Dusty Rhodes End It ... Or Make It Worse? Also: Tito Santana, Martel-Atlas, D. Funk, Mike Von Erich.

Jan. 1985: Kerry Von Erich: "I've Got Ric Flair's NWA Title Within My Grasp." Also: Albano & Lauper, Koloffs & Kernodle, Road Warriors, Lawler & Rude, Scott McGhee.

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Oct. 1985: David Schultz Gets An NWA Title Shot: Ric Flair—"I Wrestle The Men Hulk

Hogan Is Afraid Of!" Also: Misty Blue, Rick Martel, Kendall Windham, George Steele, Killer Brooks, wrestling greats' all-time top 10.

June 1986: Kerry Reveals His Secret: "I've Told Magnum T.A. How To Beat Ric Flair!" Also: Steve Williams, Hogan-Orton, Flair-Bockwinkel, Lex Luger.

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Also: Jeff Jarrett, Cactus Jack, Ric Flair, Bam Bam Bigelow, Hercules, Iron Sheik.

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Holiday 1996: WCW Shocker: Randy Savage Is Set To Join Hulk Hogan's NWO! Also: Steve

Austin, Michaels-Goldust, Arn Anderson, Van Dam-Sabu, Steve Williams.

Jan. 1997: It Could Happen! Hogan's Next Move ... Buy WCW! Also: Undertaker, New Jack, Owen-Bulldog, Ted DiBiase.

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Hol. 1997: First Owen ... Then 'Taker ... Then Hogan: Who's Gonna Go Next? Also: Steve Austin, Bret Hart, Lex Luger, Ric Flair, Dean Malenko.

Jan. 1998: Lex Luger's Plea To Sting: "Read This Story—Your Career Depends On It!" Also: Hart Foundation, Hardcore Heaven, Headbangers, Arn Anderson.

Feb. 1998: Sting Fever Strikes! And The NWO Can't Find The Cure. Also: DeGeneration X, Funk-Bret, Horsemen, New Jack-Kronus, Ken Shamrock.

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June 1998 (Special Issue): "Hollywood" Hogan: 10 More Dirt Deeds ... And He's Outta Here! Plus: Randy Savage, DeGeneration X, Jim Cornette, Randy Savage, then and now.

THE WRESTLER

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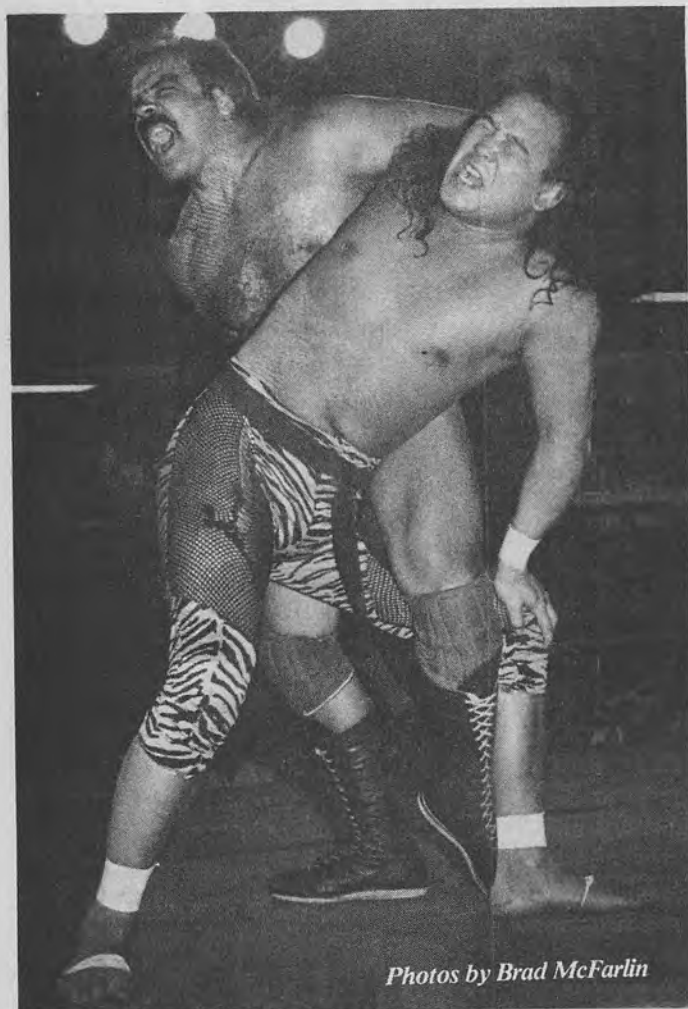
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Shocker In Las Vegas!

THE GUERREROS DEVALUE THE DIAMOND EXCHANGE



Photos by Brad McFarlin

Mando Guerrero catches Pat Tanaka in an abdominal stretch (above); Chavo Guerrero suplexes Tanaka (right). Tanaka and his Bad Company partner Paul Diamond did not expect a tough match from the Guerrero brothers, but that's exactly what they got.

WRESTLER CLASSIC!

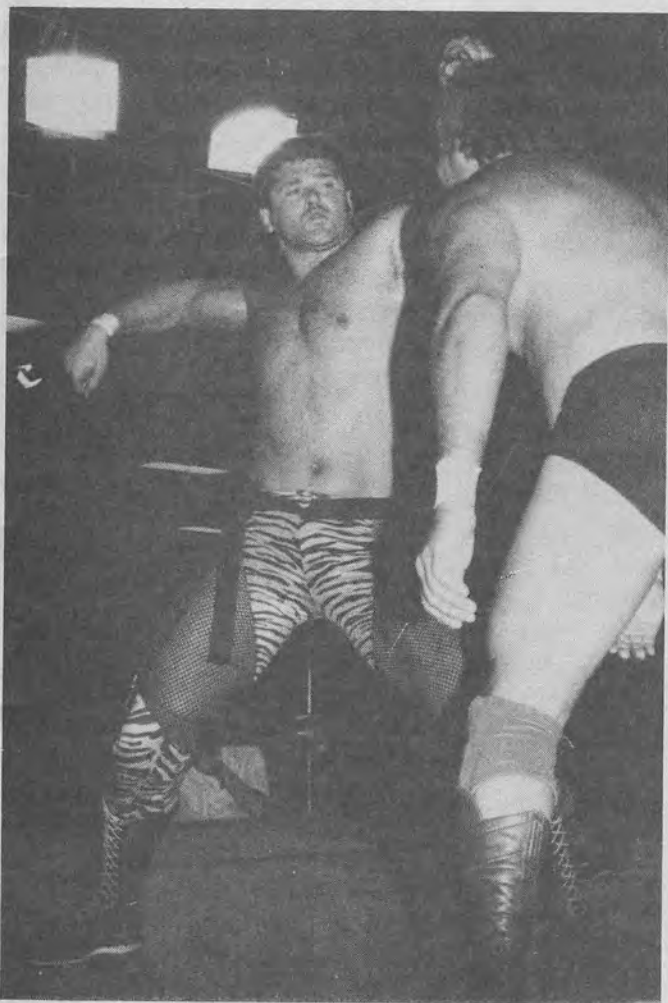
We're still shocked by what has happened to Chavo Guerrero Jr. these last few months. Two of his relatives pulled off a "shocker" of their own a decade ago. Check out this "Wrestler Classic" from December 1988 for all the details



Paul Diamond and Pat Tanaka were set for an easy match one recent night in Las Vegas. It was that night that the young AWA world champions learned that there is no such thing as an "easy match" in professional wrestling—especially against veteran technicians such as Mando and Chavo Guerrero



Chavo leglocks Diamond (above). Diamond winds up to slug Mando (below left). Mando attempts a backslide on Tanaka (below right). Against Bad Company, the Guerreros succeeded in erasing any doubts about their ability.



LAS VEGAS HAS long been the gambling capital of the world. While some claim big winnings at the slot machines and craps tables, there are thousands more who suffer big financial losses. For every dream that is

realized in Las Vegas, there are two that are shattered.

It's for that reason that "Diamond" Dallas Page, manager of AWA World tag team champions Pat Tanaka and Paul Diamond—better known at Bad Company—

becomes filled with rapture when his team is booked to wrestle at The Showboat Sports Pavilion, located in the heart of this neon desert.

"There are always winners and



About to tumble out of the ring, Mando decides to take Tanaka with him! Tanaka, Diamond, and "Diamond" Dallas Page promise never to take the Guerreros lightly again.

losers in Las Vegas, daddy," boasted Page recently, who was flanked by one of his gorgeous Diamond Dolls. "But I'm one of the few who win *all* the time here. Whether I'm at the tables or at ringside, I can't lose with Diamond and Tanaka. My Diamond Exchange is like money in the bank, baby. We are unbeatable, and we prove it every time."

When promoters offered Bad Company a match against veterans Mando and Chavo Guerrero, Page believed he had another sure bet on his hands.

"Those oldsters?" laughed Page upon receiving the contract. "Easy pickings, man. I thought Chavo was retired! These guys have got to be kidding!"

Page's confidence would soon turn into humiliation. Tanaka and Diamond suffered the worst drubbing of their championship reign at the hands of the Guerreros, an unranked team making its first Las Vegas appearance. It was a match that would change the AWA tag team picture drastically, as Mando and Chavo dominated

the champions for the duration of a thrilling, action-packed match. Tanaka and Diamond aren't used to being on the defensive, and this battle proved that they need to be on the *offensive* to win.

But as Page himself said, there are always winners and losers in Vegas. While Tanaka and Diamond managed to retain their title on a disqualification verdict, it was clear to everyone in the arena that they were outwrestled by two master technicians, a fact even more surprising since Bad Company had been running rampant over every other team in the AWA.

"How we performed should really come as no surprise," laughed Chavo Guerrero after the bout. "Mando and myself are brothers, and we are used to teaming together. The way Page and his boys talk, you would believe that we are just a couple of veterans looking for one last payday. But these 'old-timers' certainly taught Tanaka and Diamond a wrestling lesson, didn't we?"

What Page didn't know was

that the Guerreros have teamed regularly in the All-California Wrestling Association for most of this year, battling a host of rule-breaking teams. Mando had been competing singly in the AWA for several months, impressing the fans with his wealth of scientific skills. When the 225-pound veteran announced that he would bring his brother Chavo to the federation for tag matches, promoters were quick to sign a match between the Mexican team and Tanaka and Diamond, who are not favorites of AWA officials.

It turned out to be the most important title match of the year. From the opening bell, Mando and Chavo dazzled the crowd—and Tanaka and Diamond—with their wealth of unmatched aerial and on-the-mat maneuvers, many of which are becoming a rarity in pro rings. Tanaka and Diamond were so perplexed that they began arguing with each other, an unprecedented occurrence.

The end of the bout saw a brawl erupt at ringside, during which Page was knocked silly by Chavo. Even the latest Diamond Doll, Tanya, suffered an embarrassing spanking at the hands of both Guerreros. This was an incident Tanaka and Diamond weren't about to take lightly.

"I'll be honest with you," said Tanaka, still bristling from the matchup. "I haven't seen moves like those since my amateur days. We should have done our homework a little better coming into this match, but that doesn't excuse what those greaseballs did tonight. They have some nerve putting their hands on Dallas and Tanya like that, and now we're out for blood. Just wait until those guys see what we have in store for them next month."

What Page had in store was Col. DeBeers, the South African

mercenary who established himself in the AWA last year. Page immediately challenged the Guerreros to a three-man match against his stable at The Showboat.

"Let them pick any partner they want," the manager screamed. "We don't care who it is. We're gonna kick their wetback butts all over the Pavilion."

The Guerreros countered Page's move by bringing in their *third* brother, Hector, for the three-man match. As fate would have it, it was the youngest Guerrero who scored the pinfall over Diamond—despite Page's attempts at interference—in one of the wildest bouts seen in Las Vegas this year.

"This proves that the Guerreros are truly the number-one contenders to Bad Company's title," claimed Mando after the victory. "All we need now is another title bout. Any combination of Guerreros can beat those so-called champions. We realize there are other teams in the AWA, such as Ricky Rice and John Paul, but we feel that after this victory we should get top consideration. We should be very proud to earn that title."

And now Page is trying to keep his team away from two men he had previously scoffed at, mainly because he realizes that his team *can* be beaten. After months of dominating the AWA, Pat Tanaka and Paul Diamond must now regroup and try to regain the status they have suddenly lost.

Meanwhile, Page can be seen in the finest casinos in Las Vegas, usually playing the slot machines. Every time he spins and fails to win, he probably sees the faces of Mando, Chavo, and Hector Guerrero in those slots. Page has always believed that he can't lose, but with the Guerreros holding the trump card, he may soon have to cash in his chips—perhaps for the final time. ☐

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TOP 10

- 1 **STEVE AUSTIN**
252, Victoria, TX
(2) WWF World champion
- 2 **BILL GOLDBERG**
270, Tulsa, OK
(1) WCW World champion
- 3 **THE UNDERTAKER**
328, parts unknown
(3) No. 2 contender: WWF World title
- 4 **LEX LUGER**
265, Chicago, IL
(6) WCW U.S. champion
- 5 **MASA CHONO**
235, Tokyo, Japan
(-) IWGP heavyweight champion
- 6 **HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY**
279, Greenwich, CT
(-) No. 4 contender: WWF World title
- 7 **DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE**
260, Tampa, FL
(-) No. 3 contender: WCW World title
- 8 **KENTA KOBASHI**
261, Fukuichi, Japan
(10) All-Japan Triple Crown champion
- 9 **ROB VAN DAM**
237, Battle Creek, MI
(8) ECW TV champion
- 10 **JUVENTUD GUERRERA**
165, Mexico City, Mexico
(-) WCW cruiserweight champion



Juventud Guerrera

TAG TEAMS

- 1 **KANE & MANKIND**
Combined weight: 622 pounds
(-) WWF World tag team champions
- 2 **THE GIANT & SCOTT HALL**
Combined weight: 700 pounds
(-) WCW World tag team champions
- 3 **SABU & ROB VAN DAM**
Combined weight: 447 pounds
(3) ECW tag team champions
- 4 **STEVE AUSTIN & THE UNDERTAKER**
Combined weight: 580 pounds
(-) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 5 **BILLY GUNN & JESSE JAMES**
Combined weight: 496 pounds
(1) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 6 **SHIRO KOSHINAKA & GENICHIRO TENRYU**
Combined weight: 555 pounds
(-) IWGP tag team champions
- 7 **OWEN HART & ROCKY MAIVIA**
Combined weight: 499 pounds
(-) No. 3 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 8 **TOSHIAKI KAWADA & AKIRA TAUE**
Combined weight: 510 pounds
(-) All-Japan International tag team champions
- 9 **BUH BUH RAY & D-VON DUDLEY**
Combined weight: 585 pounds
(-) No. 1 contenders: ECW tag title
- 10 **EIGHT-BALL & SKULL**
Combined weight: 517 pounds
(5) No. 4 contenders: WWF World tag title

WCW

World Champion:

BILL GOLDBERG

(C) 270, Tulsa, OK

- 1—**LEX LUGER**
(3) 265, Chicago, IL
- 2—**BRET HART**
(-) 235, Calgary, Alberta
- 3—**DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE**
(7) 260, Tampa, FL
- 4—**JUVENTUD GUERRERA**
(-) 165, Mexico City, Mexico
- 5—**STING**
(4) 260, Venice Beach, CA
- 6—**CHRIS JERICHO**
(6) 225, Vancouver, British Columbia
- 7—**HOLLYWOOD HOGAN**
(1) 275, Venice Beach, CA
- 8—**PERRY SATURN**
(-) 234, Boston, MA
- 9—**THE GIANT**
(8) 510, parts unknown
- 10—**REY MISTERIO JR.**
(-) 140, San Diego, CA

WWF

World Champion:

STEVE AUSTIN

(C) 252, Victoria, TX

- 1—**ROCKY MAIVIA**
(1) 272, Pearl City, HI
- 2—**THE UNDERTAKER**
(2) 328, parts unknown
- 3—**HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY**
(5) 279, Greenwich, CT
- 4—**KEN SHAMROCK**
(3) 235, San Bernardino, CA
- 5—**KANE**
(4) 345, parts unknown
- 6—**OWEN HART**
(6) 227, Calgary, Alberta
- 7—**MARK HENRY**
(-) 413, Austin, TX
- 8—**D-LO BROWN**
(-) 305, Bronx, NY
- 9—**X-PAC**
(10) 212, Minneapolis, MN
- 10—**BRADSHAW**
(-) 309, Roscoe, TX

NWA

NWA Champion:

DAN SEVERN

(C) 265, Detroit, MI

- 1—**COLORADO KID**
(2) 231, Denver, CO
- 2—**ERICH SBRACCIA**
(7) 242, Boston, MA
- 3—**DORY FUNK JR.**
(3) 250, Amarillo, TX
- 4—**DOUG GILBERT**
(8) 241, Lexington, TN
- 5—**BARRY WINDHAM**
(5) 273, Sweetwater, TX
- 6—**ACTION JACKSON**
(-) 300, Dallas, TX
- 7—**HEADSHRINKER SAMU**
(-) 278, Samoa
- 8—**MR. GILLIS**
(4) 221, Vancouver, British Columbia
- 9—**RECON**
(-) 245, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 10—**KIT CARSON**
(-) 231, Dallas, TX

ECW

ECW Champion:

SHANE DOUGLAS

(C) 240, Pittsburgh, PA

- 1—**ROB VAN DAM**
(1) 237, Battle Creek, MI
- 2—**JUSTIN CREDIBLE**
(5) 225, Waterbury, CT
- 3—**TAZ**
(2) 248, Red Hook, NY
- 4—**JERRY LYNN**
(6) 214, Minneapolis, MN
- 5—**BAM BAM BIGELOW**
(4) 368, Mt. Laurel, NJ
- 6—**LANCE STORM**
(3) 234, Calgary, Alberta
- 7—**NEW JACK**
(-) 225, Philadelphia, PA
- 8—**MASATO TANAKA**
(-) 235, Tokyo, Japan
- 9—**CHRIS CANDIDO**
(8) 226, Carteret, NJ
- 10—**MIKE AWESOME**
(-) 261, Tampa, FL

OFFICIAL RATINGS

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

For period ended August 11, 1998

AAA: Champion—Perro Aguayo; 1—Abismo Negro; 2—Heavy Metal; 3—Octagon; 4—Latin Lover; 5—Fuerza Guerrera; 6—Pentagon; 7—Perro Aguayo Jr.; 8—Ludxor; 9—Frisbee; 10—Blue Demon Jr.

AMERICAN INDEPENDENT WRESTLING FEDERATION: Champion—Robert Roma; 1—Don Carson; 2—Craig Pittman; 3—Brian Danzig; 4—Jumpin' Jimmy; 5—Jackie Anderson; 6—Daniel Mayes; 7—Steve Niles; 8—Easy Rider; 9—Luscious Kevin; 10—Jammer.

CHAMPIONSHIP PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Bob Keller; 1—Demolition Ax; 2—Shane Shadows; 3—Honky Tonk Man; 4—Iron Sheik; 5—Combat Kid; 6—Major Mayhem; 7—Switchblade; 8—Mohammed Kane; 9—Mark Mest; 10—The Cremator.

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION: Champion—Christian Cage; 1—Reckless Youth; 2—Lance Diamond; 3—Inferno Kid; 4—Devon Storm; 5—Ace Darling; 6—Glen Osbourne; 7—Mark Shrader; 8—Boogie Woogie Brown; 9—Mr. Ooh La La; 10—Thunder.

EASTERN WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Master Sandy; 1—Tony Atlas; 2—Jimmy Snuka; 3—Kid USA; 4—Dave Vicious; 5—Robbie Ellis; 6—Mr. Mercenary; 7—Freight Train; 8—Dean Powers; 9—El Mascarado; 10—Steve Ramsey.

INTER-CONTINENTAL PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Steve Sharp; 1—Mabel; 2—Treach Phillips Jr.; 3—Motley Cruz; 4—Nitetrain Crane; 5—Bill Ash; 6—Odell Buckingham; 7—Johnny Morton; 8—Johnny Jeti; 9—Doug Masters; 10—Luke Graham Jr.

INT'L PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Tom Brandi; 1—King Kong Bundy; 2—Tito Santana; 3—Frank Stalletto; 4—Julio Sanchez; 5—Reckless Youth; 6—Mike Quackenbush; 7—Johnny Graham; 8—Christian York; 9—Mark Shrader; 10—Corporal Punishment.

MUSIC CITY WRESTLING: Champion—Colorado Kid; 1—Recon; 2—Flash Flanagan; 3—Wolfie D; 4—Billy Black; 5—Steven Dunn; 6—Lord Humongous; 7—Reno Riggins; 8—Chris Michaels; 7—Andy Anderson; 10—Shane Eden.

NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE NEW ENGLAND: Champion—Eric Sbraccia; 1—Curtis Slamm Dogg; 2—Knuckles Nelson; 3—The Mercenary; 4—Tony Rumble; 5—Jay Kobain; 6—Baldo; 7—Abdullah the Butcher; 8—Tombstone; 7—Rick Fuller; 10—King Kong Bundy.

NORTH AMERICAN WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Shane Hooker; 1—Intimidator; 2—Iceman; 3—Big Poppa; 4—Idol X; 5—Mr. X; 6—Arty Donovan; 7—Gino Blanchard; 8—Highland Pitbull; 9—Bob Ozark; 10—K.D. Campbell.

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Julio Sanchez; 1—Reckless Youth; 2—Lance Diamond; 3—Glen Osbourne; 4—Christian Cage; 5—Tiger Khan; 6—Sexton Hardcastle; 7—Dave Patera; 8—Chris Krueger; 9—Mike Quackenbush; 10—J.R. Ryder.

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION: Champion—Italian Stallion; 1—George South; 2—Black Angel; 3—Ripper; 4—The Baron; 5—Super Ninja; 6—The Breeze; 7—The Bodyguard; 8—American G.I.; 9—Flaming Youth; 10—Cruel Connection II.

NEW JAPAN

IWGP Champion:

MASA CHONO

(2) 235, Tokyo, Japan

1—TATSUMI FUJINAMI

(C) 234, Oita, Japan

2—KENSUKE SASAKI

(1) 233, Tokyo, Japan

3—HIROYOSHI TENZAN

(5) 270, Tokyo, Japan

4—SHIRO KOSHINAKA

(3) 225, Tokyo, Japan

5—SHINYA HASHIMOTO

(6) 287, Gifu, Japan

6—KEIJI MUTO

(-) 245, Yamanaishi, Japan

7—JUSHIN LIGER

(8) 206, Hiroshima, Japan

8—DON FRYE

(7) 235, Sierra Vista, AZ

9—KOJI KANEMOTO

(4) 205, Osaka, Japan

10—MICHAEL WALL STREET

(-) 248, Syracuse, NY

ALL-JAPAN

Triple Crown Champion:

KENTA KOBASHI

(C) 261, Fukushima, Japan

1—JUN AKIYAMA

(1) 230, Hiroshima, Japan

2—TOSHIKI KAWADA

(2) 245, Ashikaga, Japan

3—TAKAO OMORI

(8) 221, Tokyo, Japan

4—AKIRA TAUE

(3) 265, Chichibu, Japan

5—JOHNNY ACE

(4) 250, San Bernardino, CA

6—MAUNUKEA MOSSMAN

(5) 245, Honolulu, HI

7—WOLF HAWKFIELD

(7) 272, New Port Richey, FL

8—GARY ALBRIGHT

(6) 343, Billings, MT

9—HIROSHI HASE

(9) 225, Kanazawa, Japan

10—TAMON HONDA

(-) 191, Tokyo, Japan

EMLL

EMLL Champion:

UNIVERSO DOS MIL

(C) 240, Mexico City, Mexico

1—EL HIJO DEL SANTO

(1) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico

2—NEGRO CASAS

(3) 175, Mexico City, Mexico

3—DR. WAGNER JR.

(6) 215, Mexico City, Mexico

4—BLUE PANTHER

(-) 215, Mexico City, Mexico

5—ULTIMO DRAGON

(5) 175, Mexico City, Mexico

6—FELINO

(4) 165, Mexico City, Mexico

7—MR. NIEBLA

(-) 185, Cuautitlan, Mexico

8—BLACK WARRIOR

(9) 221, Mexico City, Mexico

9—VILLANO IV

(-) 198, Naucalpan, Mexico

10—SCORPIO JR.

(-) 195, Nezahualcoyotl, Mexico

PROMO AZTECA

Promo Azteca Champion:

PIRATA MORGAN

(2) 221, Mexico City, Mexico

1—KONNAN

(C) 237, Mexico City, Mexico

2—LA PARKA

(-) 235, Montclava, Mexico

3—JERRY ESTRADA

(-) 239, Montclava, Mexico

4—JUVENTUD GUERRERA

(7) 165, Mexico City, Mexico

5—PSICOSIS

(9) 234, Tijuana, Mexico

6—SILVER KING

(4) 245, Coahuila, Mexico

7—SUPER CALO

(-) 210, Tijuana, Mexico

8—SUPER CRAZZY

(-) 220, Naucalpan, Mexico

9—VENUM BLACK

(-) 205, Tijuana, Mexico

10—PIERROTH JR.

(1) 251, Cuernavaca, Mexico

Ratings

ANALYSIS

What's up with this guy? And we all thought we had a hard time figuring out **Sting** during his "silent year"! It became obvious after a while that he was anti-NWO, but since he never spoke, we didn't know what he was thinking.



Sting

But the silent Sting—the Sting with the black and white face paint and the baseball bat in hand—was an effective Sting. He had two brief WCW World title reigns in late-1997 and early-'98. When he joined **NWO Wolfpac** and became a bit more happy-go-lucky, he seemed to lose something. Even though he won the WCW World tag team title and scored several impressive wins over **The Giant**, he didn't seem as dangerous as he had been only a few months earlier. That was reflected in our ratings, as he slipped from second in our Top 10 in the August and September 1998 issues to third in October to eighth last issue.

We weren't sure exactly what to make of his decision to get rid of the red and black Wolfpac paint, reapply some of his old black and white paint, and again descend upon the ring from the ceiling with his trusty bat back in his hands on August 3. Why did he (grudgingly) team with **Bret Hart**, a member of **NWO Hollywood**, against **Scott Hall** and **The Giant**, two other members of **NWO Hollywood**, that night?

Whatever Sting's reasoning is, we think he'd be smart to go back to that "old" look. There was just something about that Sting that was so sinister and menacing. He appears to be more confident and aggressive when he has the black and white paint covering his face. If he sticks with that look, he could be well on his way to another WCW World title reign ... and a big jump up in our ratings.

A tale of two WWF supergroups. Just when **DeGeneration X** seemed to be hitting an all-time high in popularity, the group now appears to be slowly falling apart. It didn't take long for things to get ugly between **Hunter Hearst Helmsley** and **X-Pac** when they battled **Rocky Maivia** of **The Nation** in a triple threat match for the Intercontinental belt in late-July. They bickered so much that "The Rock" was able to quietly slide out of the ring, grab his belt, and head for the locker room (he was counted out).

The very next night, **Chyna** interfered on Hunter's behalf, allowing "Triple-H" to pin X-Pac. They say they've since patched up all their differences, but we wonder whether that's really true. They admit they don't spend as much time together on the road as they used to. And just look at the group's record of late. Hunter earned his spot in our Top 10 this month as a result of his numerous wins by disqualification over **Maivia**.

But X-Pac has been inconsistent since he returned from his serious neck injury. He has made the WWF rankings, but it might be a while before we can seriously consider him for the Top 10.

Meanwhile, the other two DX wrestlers, **Billy Gunn** and **Jesse James**, seem to be fading fast. They've suffered numerous losses since dropping the WWF tag team belts to **Kane** and **Mankind**, who have since lost them to **Steve Austin** and **The Undertaker**. They're not even the number-one contenders.

Meanwhile, **Maivia** and **The Nation** are doing just fine, thank you. Granted, "The Rock" was barely hanging on to that I-C title at press time, but haven't we been saying that ever since he was awarded the belt in December of last year? He has consistently earned spots in the Top 10 since then. Meanwhile, **D-Lo Brown**, if he can show us a few impressive defenses of that European title, has a great shot at grabbing a spot in the Top 10 in the very near future.

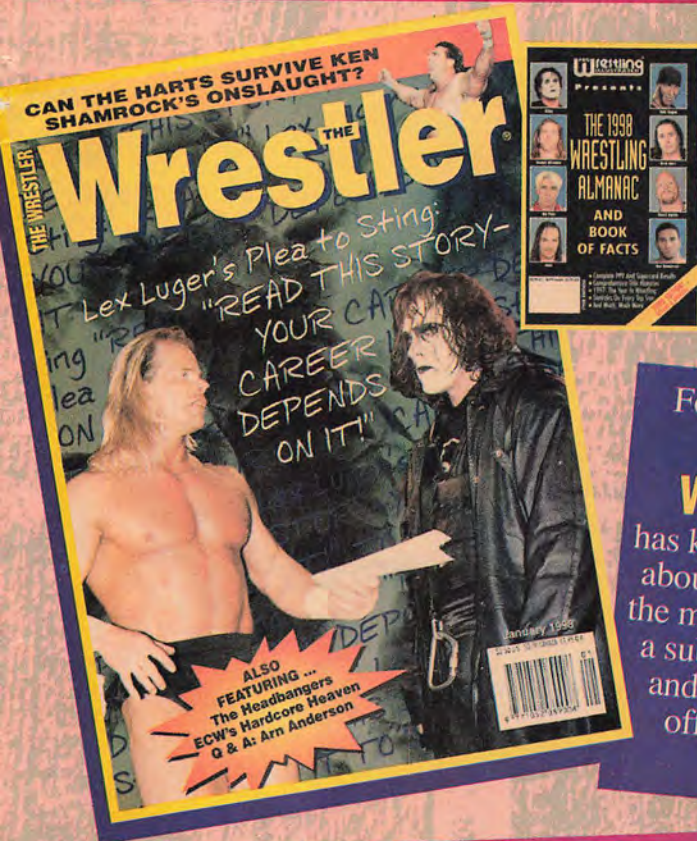
Let's not forget about **Owen Hart**, either. He's a former WWF World tag team, Intercontinental, and European champion; he's a threat to every title in the WWF. It's possible that in time, **Kama Mustafa** and **Mark Henry** will make a serious run at the tag team belts. Also worth pointing out is that unlike in DX, there appears to be absolutely no dissension inside **The Nation**. Much to everyone's surprise, "The Rock" and Owen are having no trouble getting along. □



Steve Austin

That's all for this month! If you have any questions or comments pertaining to our ratings or what you see on this page, we want to hear from you. Write to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o THE WRESTLER, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

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